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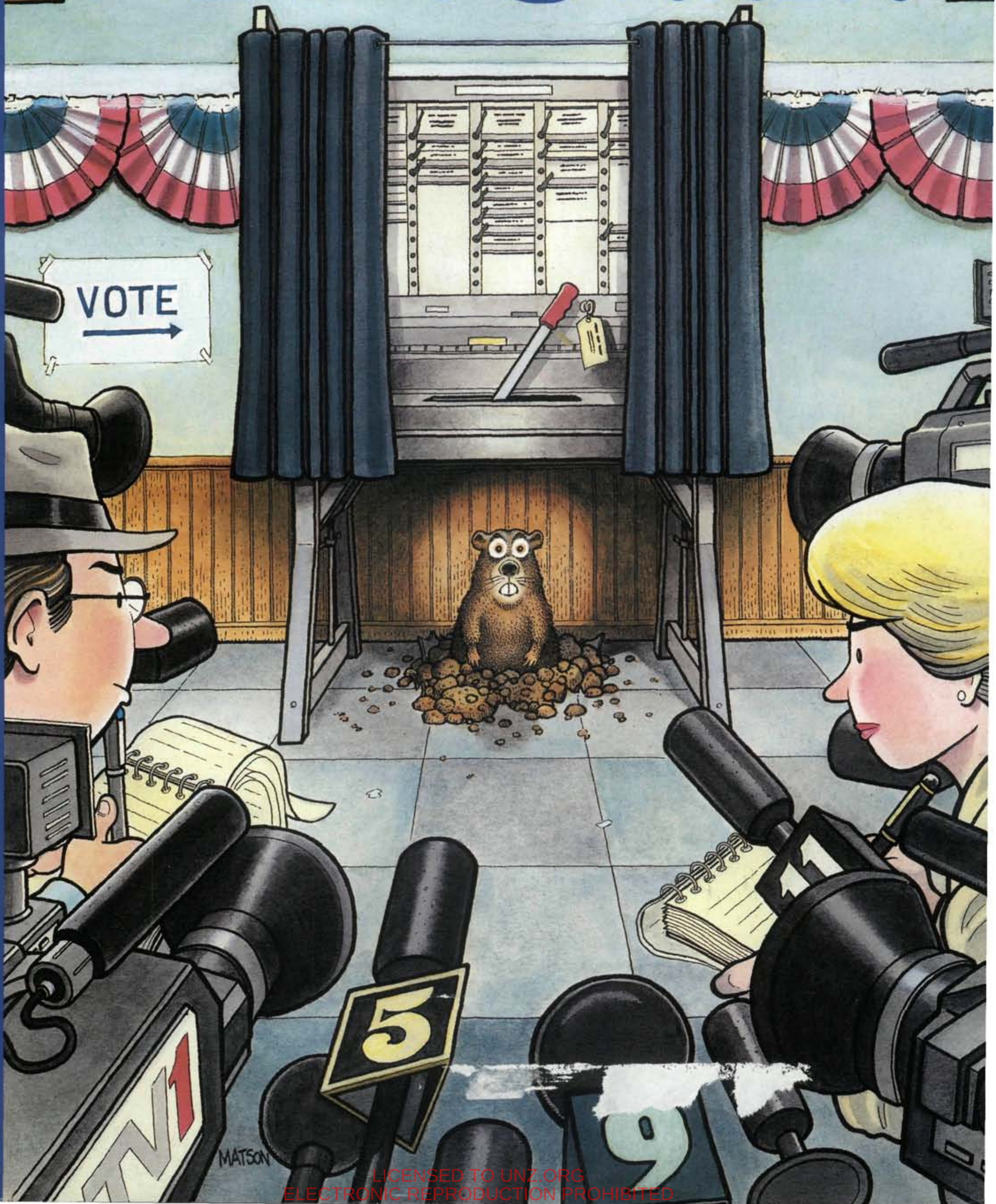
THE NEW YORKER

Feb. 7, 2000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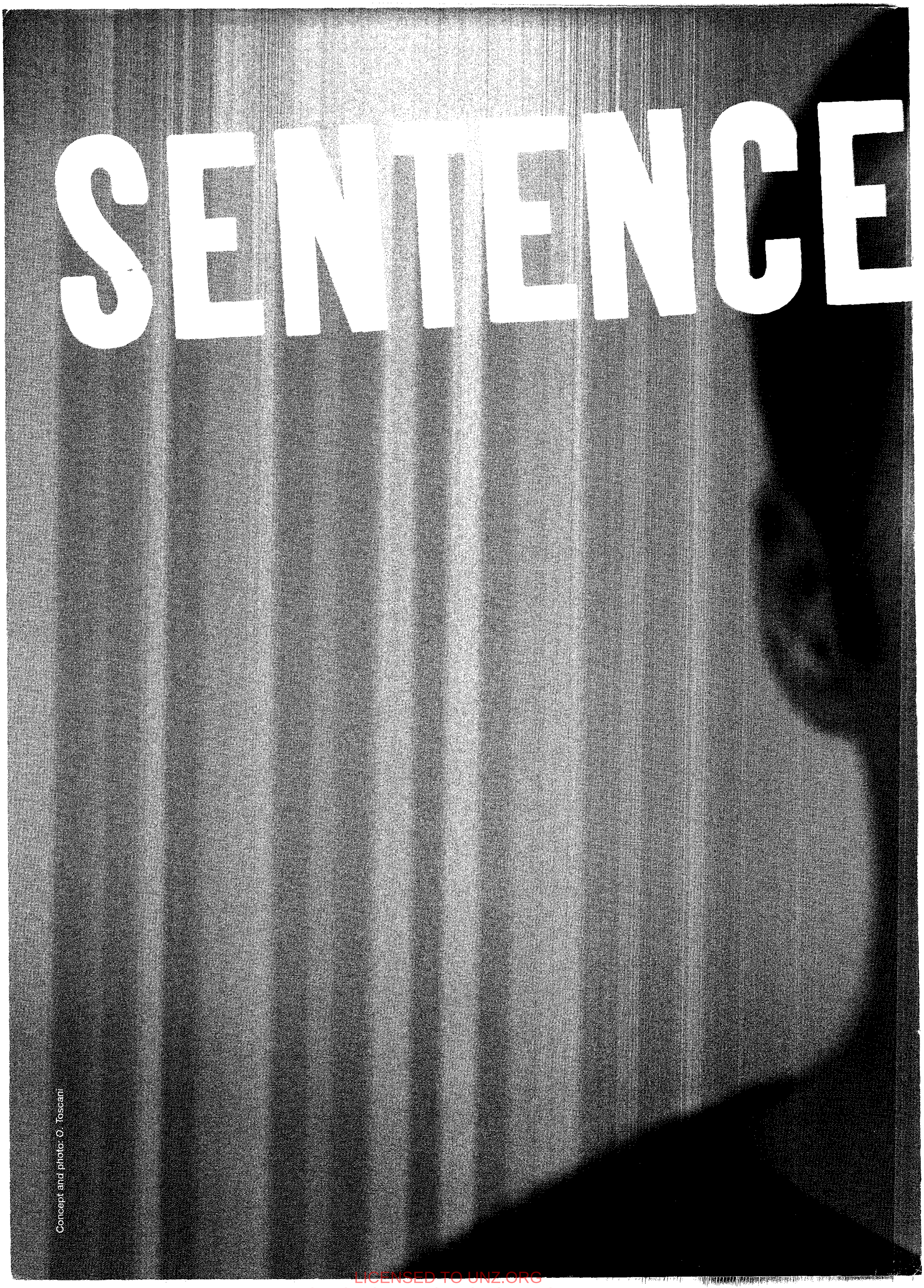

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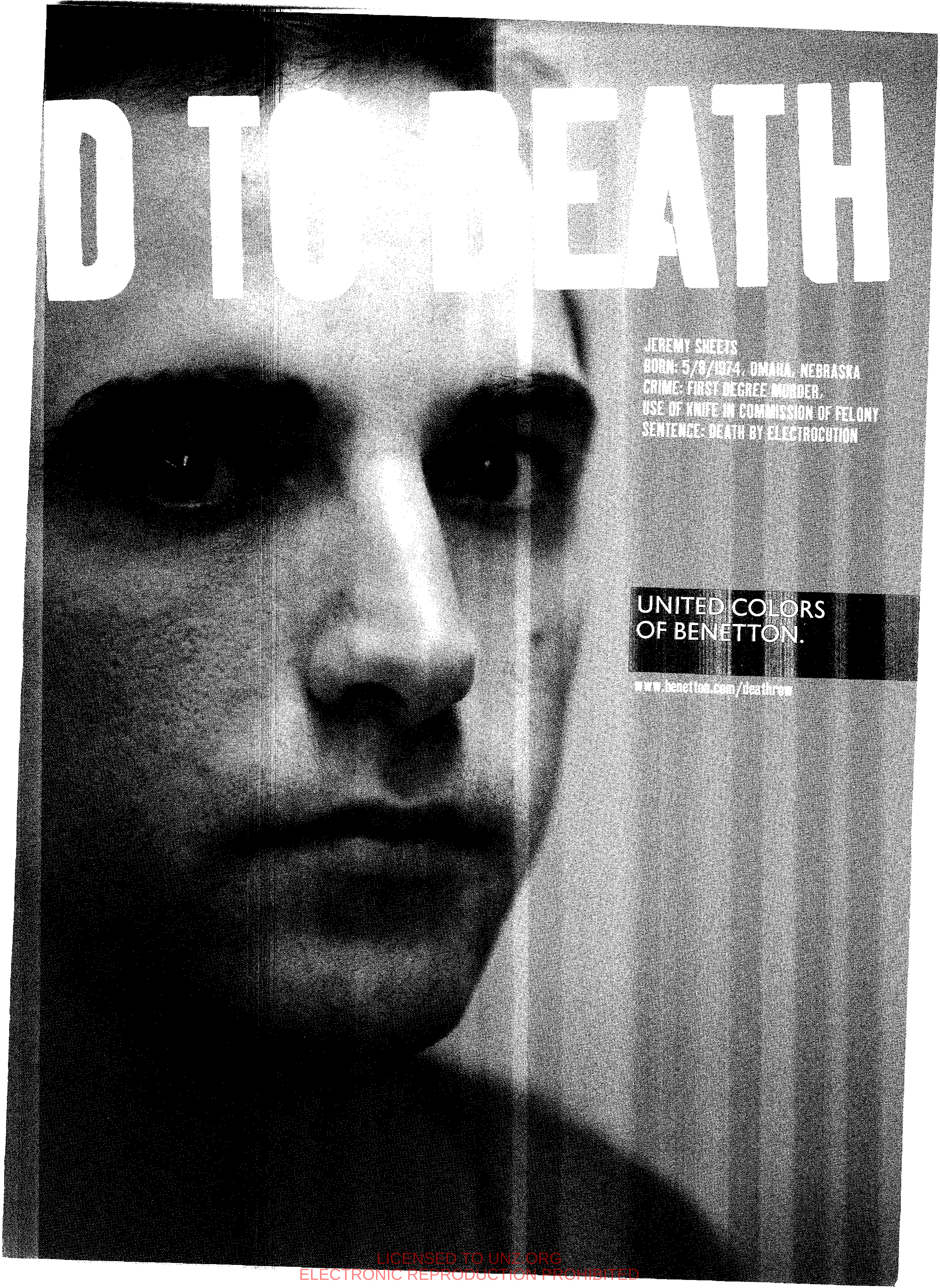
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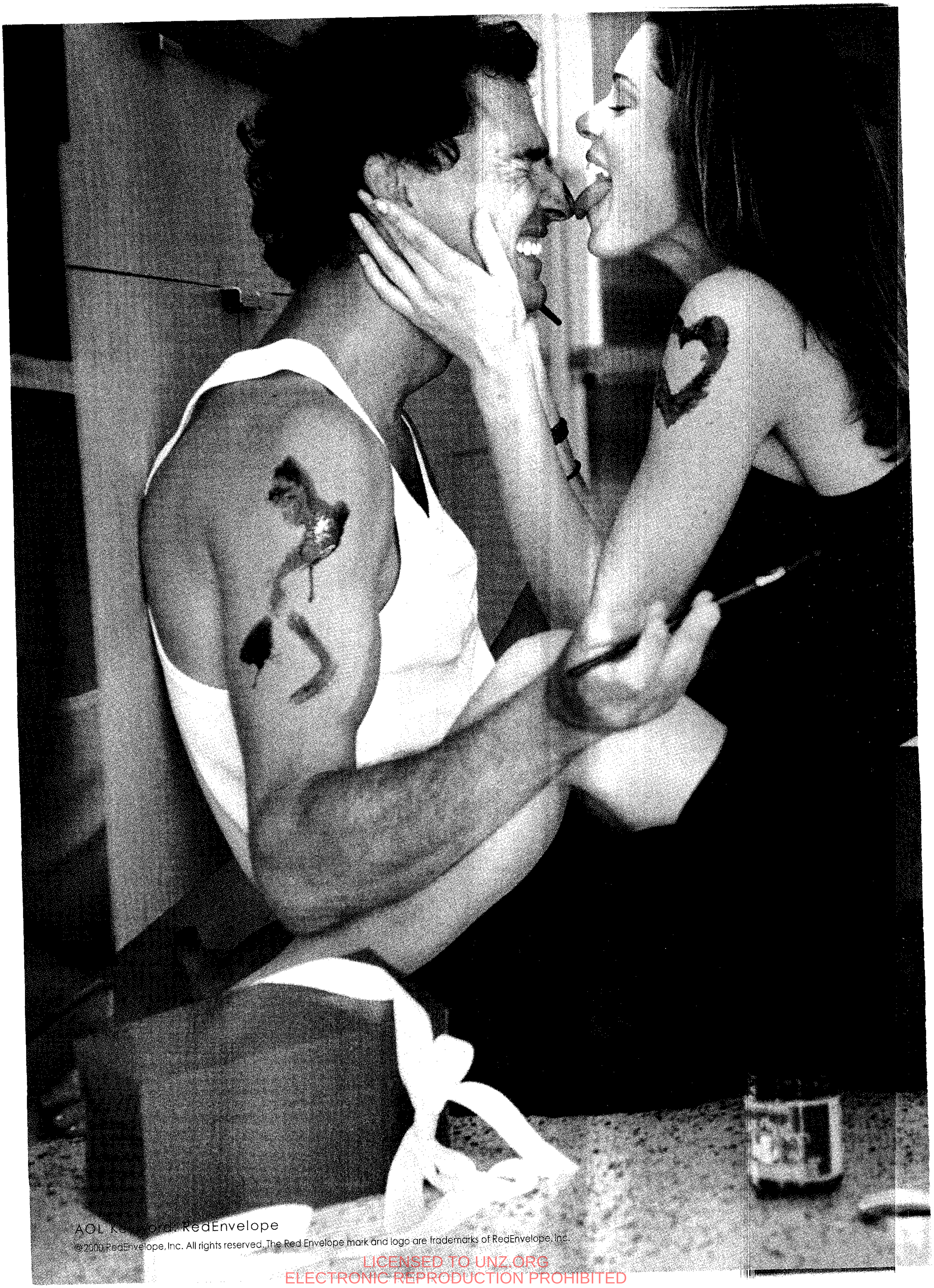

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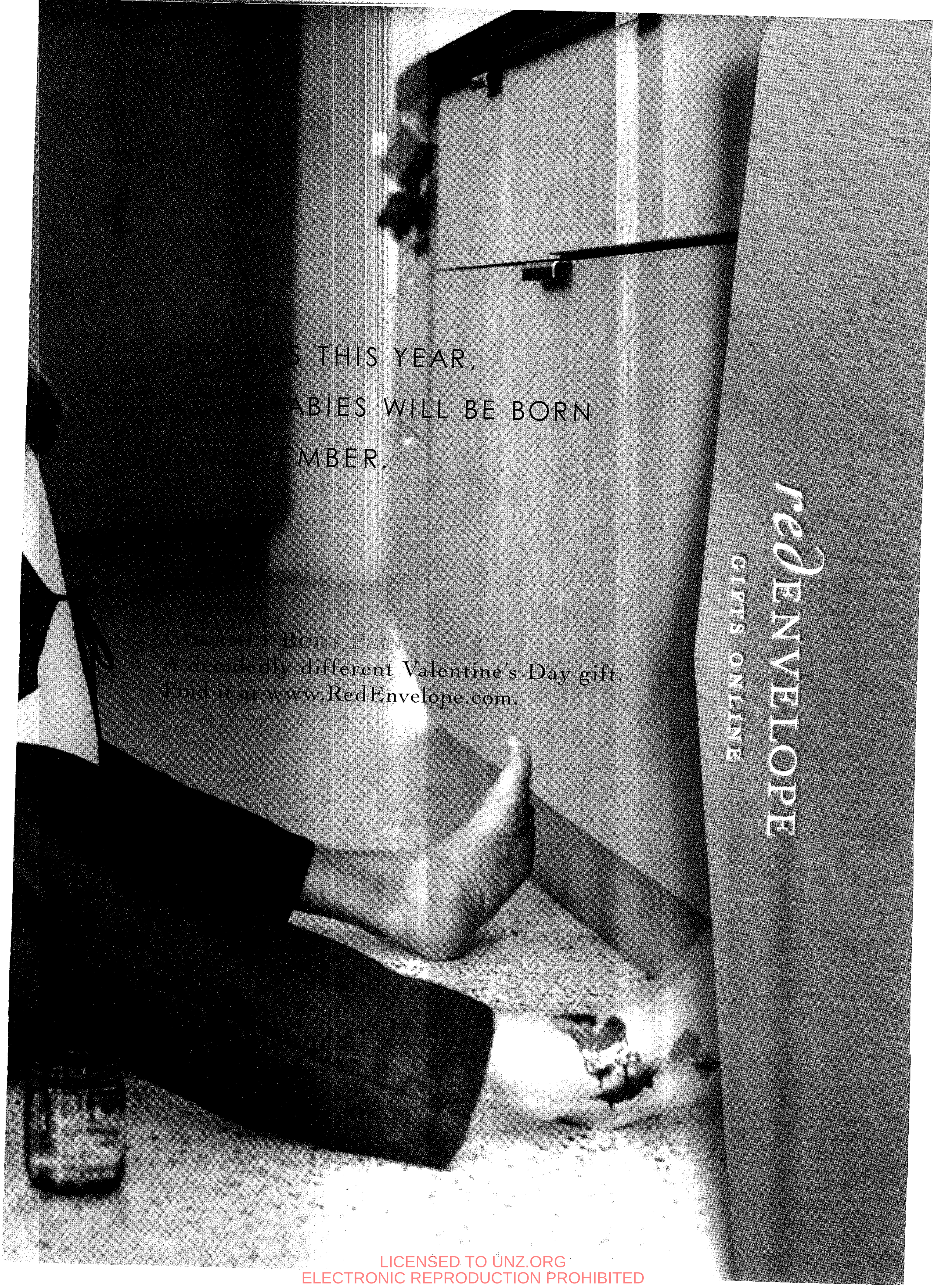
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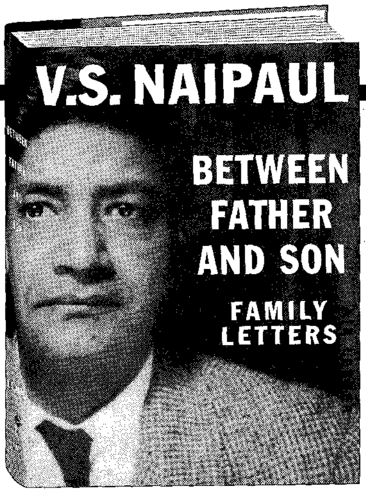

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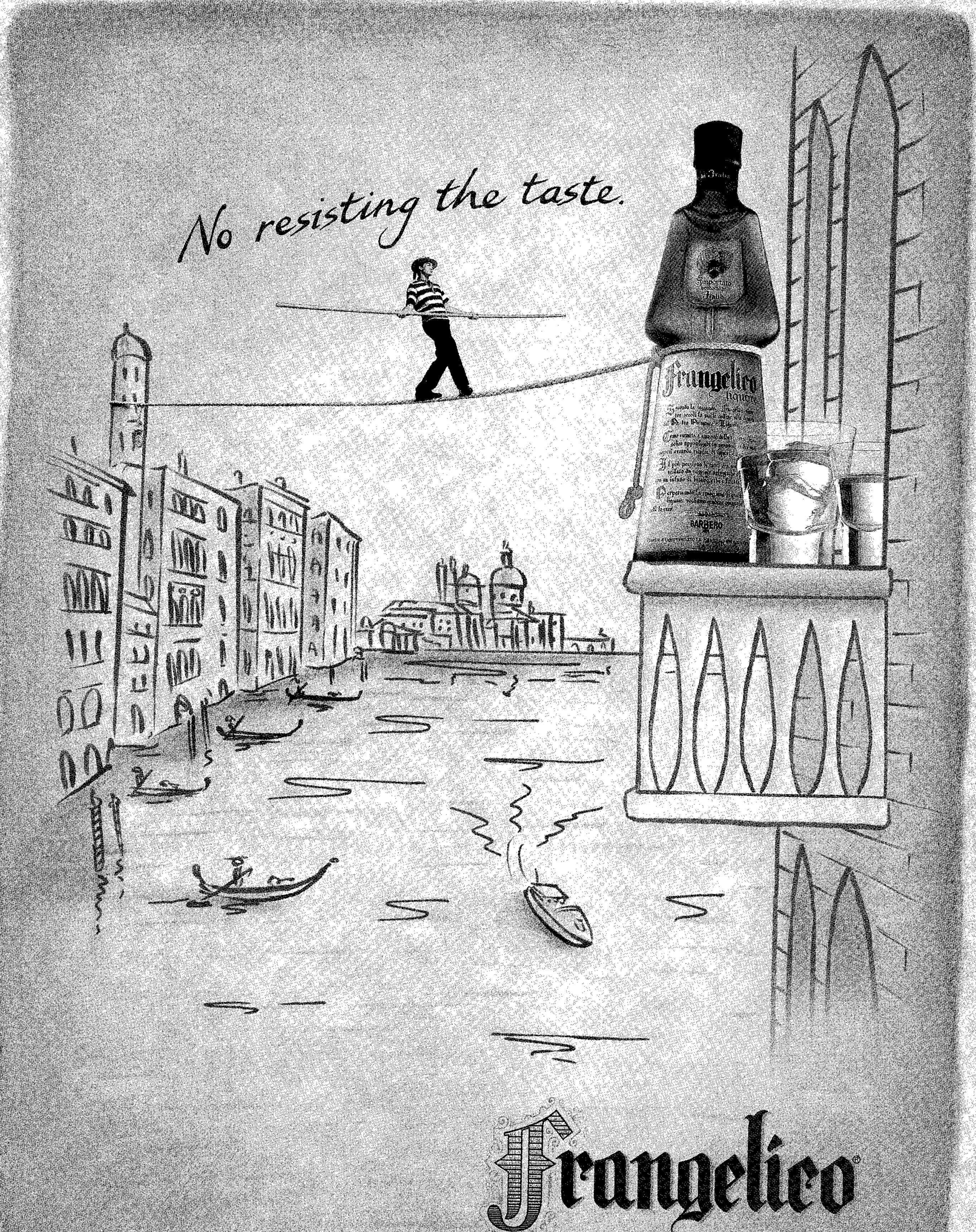
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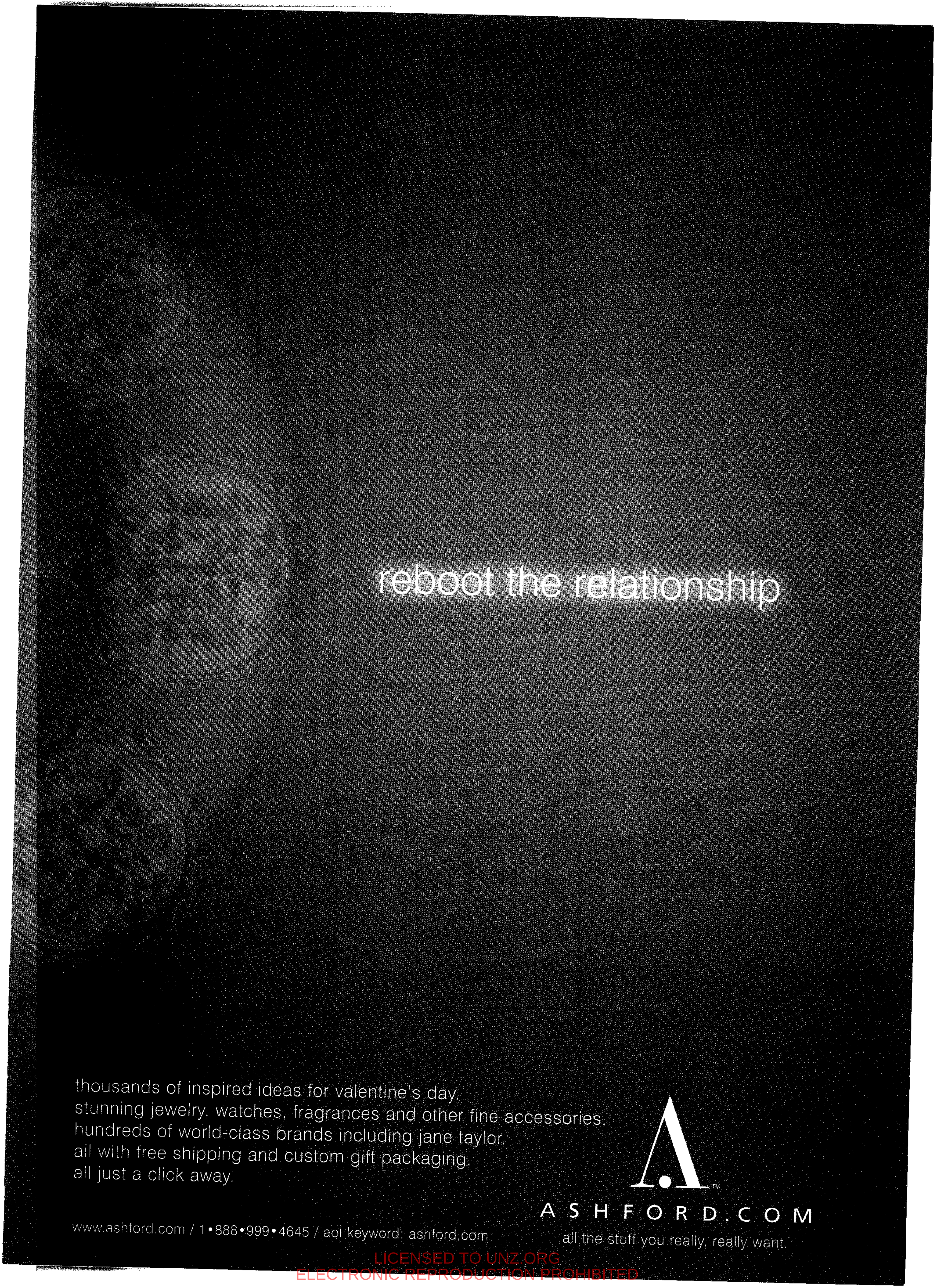

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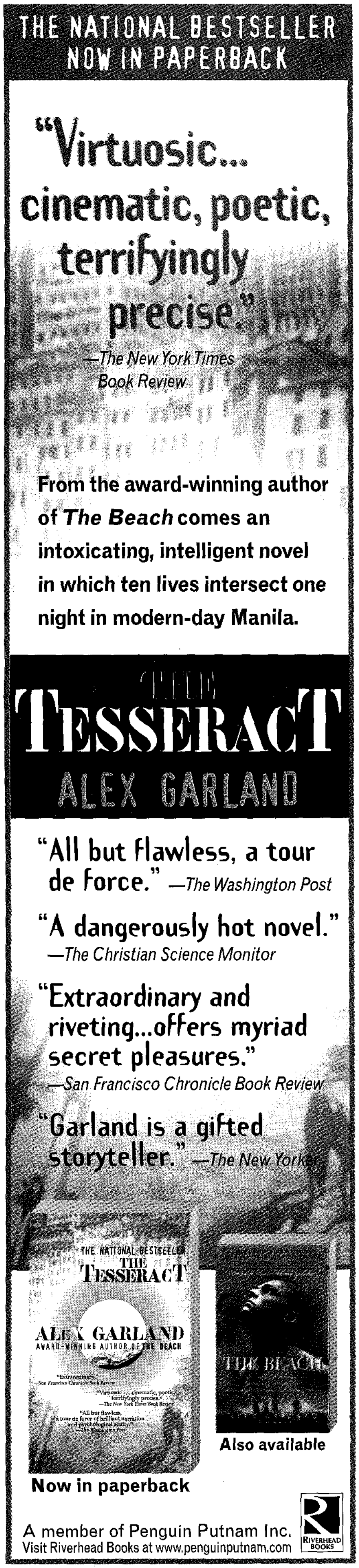
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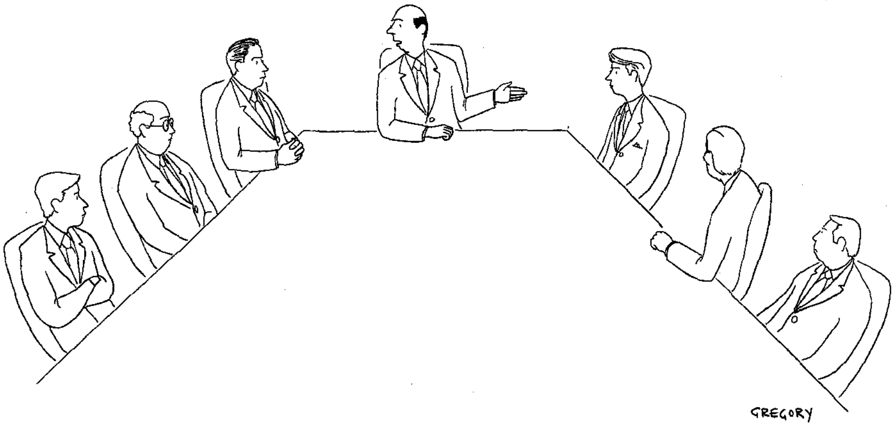

"In the interest of cultural diversity, we've hired Jason, here, who owns a number of hip-hop CDs."

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THE MAIL

RATTLE PRATTLE

In "Baby Steps" (January 10th) Malcolm Gladwell argues that, according to the latest findings in brain science, "child development is a rational process directed and propelled by the child himself." He quotes one scientist's conclusion that "other people don't simply shape what children do; parents aren't the programmers. Instead, they seem designed to provide just the right sort of information." What does this really mean? What does this say about the work of parenthood—that parents are just passive elements in their baby's environment? Or that whatever impulses parents have around their baby are just what the baby needs? Anyone who's been a parent knows that's hooey. Children do seem to be programmed to blossom into healthy, vital people, but even so a lot can go wrong. Why sneer at public figures who recognize the importance of early-childhood development and of educating and supporting parents in one of the hardest and most important jobs they'll ever have?

THEA CRITES
New York City

Malcolm Gladwell criticizes a passage from my book "What's Going on in There? How the Brain and Mind Develop in the First Five Years of Life" about the importance of caregivers' avoiding "muddled baby-talk" by speaking to babies in the "cleanest, simplest model of speech possible." He contrasts that view with other authors' findings on the importance of "motherese," a slower, higher-pitched, and highly intonated style of speech. But I draw a distinction between motherese and muddled baby talk and include an extensive discussion of why motherese is both universal and in many ways perfectly suited to young infants' auditory and language-perception abilities.

Furthermore, nowhere in my book do I paint the kind of deterministic picture of infancy that is caricatured by Gladwell and by John Bruer, the author of "The Myth of the First Three Years." In fact, Bruer and I adhere to much of the same data—and come to many of the same conclusions about it: that parents should be highly vigilant for visual and hearing problems in their infants; that foreign languages should be taught in the United States much earlier than they are; that working parents are not harming their children by placing them in early child care. Like Bruer, I take pains to point out that different mental skills (and their underlying neural structures) exhibit different critical periods in their development, some ending in infancy, some lasting all the way to adolescence. There is nothing final about a child's third birthday. But every neuroscientist knows that the brain is fantastically more plastic in infancy than in later life. There are two ways to think about this plasticity: as a restriction (the critical windows for learning that Bruer parodies as "slamming shut") or as an opportunity. I prefer to focus on the latter.

LISE ELIOT, PH.D.
Dept. of Anatomy and Cell Biology
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Mr. Gladwell fears that focussing on early childhood education will create policy in which "our obligations to the disadvantaged expire by the time they reach the age of three." But it is ludicrous to suggest that the whole of our national commitment to educating youth would be undermined by increased support for programs that serve younger children. Some families spend up to thirty-five per cent of their income on such programs. Furthermore, most of the best programs are not self-supporting, which means that millions of families are unable to afford them. It's about time that policymakers start calling attention to this problem.

ROEY THORPE
Executive Director
Ithaca Community Childcare Center
Ithaca, N.Y.

•

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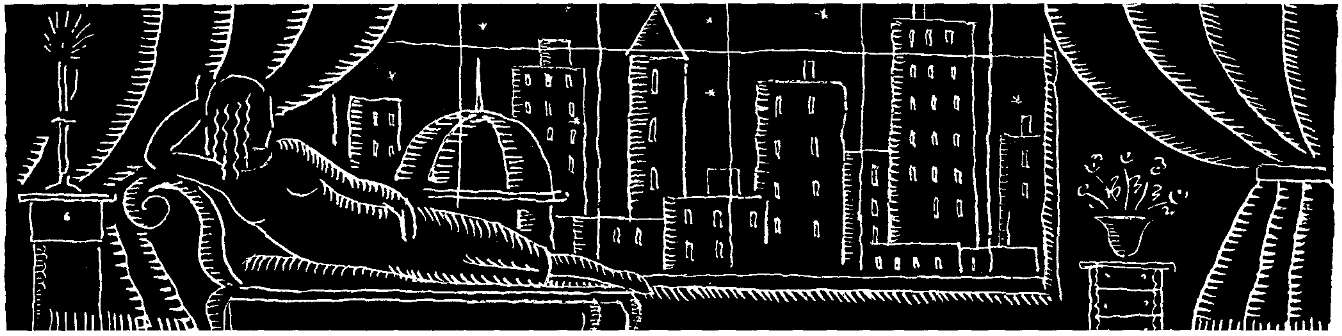

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Arms and the Man—A Roundabout Theatre production of Shaw's 1894 play, under the direction of Roger Rees. In previews. (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 777-4900.)

Bad Boy Nietzsche—Richard Foreman's forty-seventh play explores the psychological deterioration of the nineteenth-century philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. In previews through Feb. 6. Opens Feb. 8 at 8. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

The Director—John Shea stars as a once well-known director turned janitor who gets involved with a young and credulous theatre troupe, in a suspense drama by Nancy Hasty. In previews. (Arclight, 152 W. 71st St. 279-4200.)

Jane Eyre—The British troupe Shared Experience comes to the Brooklyn Academy of Music to present an adaptatation of the Brontë novel, written and directed by Polly Teale. Six performances only. Feb. 8 at 7:30. Continues through Feb. 13. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

Noses Off—A dark comedy, set in 1916, about the plight of Ringling Brothers' last solo clown, whose act was replaced by a troupe of twenty-five motley fools. Feb. 3-5 at 7:30 and Feb. 6 at 3 and 7:30. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-0051.)

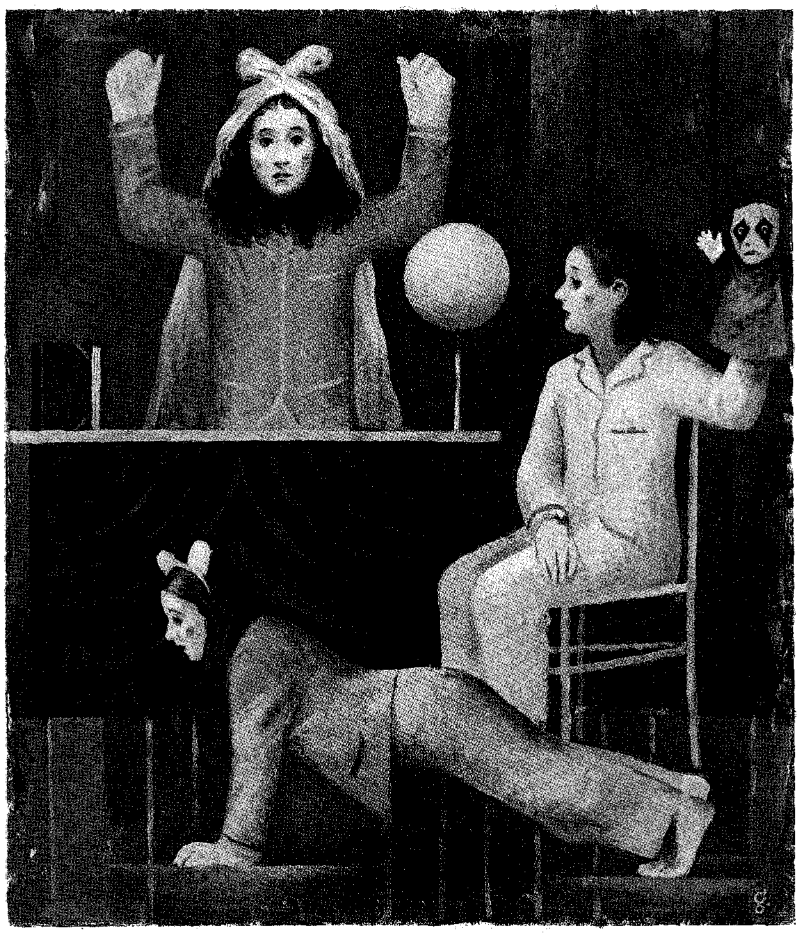
Our Place in Time—Six actors portray more than thirty New York characters navigating events of the last half-century, in a collection of interwoven scenes by Clare Coss. In previews through Feb. 5. Opens Feb. 6 at 3. (Women's Project and Productions Theatre, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200.)

Saturday Night—Stephen Sondheim's first musical, about a Flatbush man (David Campbell) who leaves Brooklyn in 1929 to seek his fortune on Wall Street and win a débutante's heart. In previews. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

The Time of the Cuckoo—A Lincoln Center Theatre revival of the 1953 Arthur Laurents drama, about the romance between an American woman in Venice (Debra Monk) and an Italian shopkeeper (Olek Krupa). In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center, 239-6200.)

Two Sisters and a Piano—Nilo Cruz's drama, set in Cuba in 1991, traces the fate of two women (Daphne Rubin-Vega and Adriana Sevan) who speak out against Castro. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

The Wild Party—A musical by Andrew Lippa, based on the 1928 poem by Joseph Moncure March. Gabriel Barre is the director. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)



"Infrared," by Mac Wellman, performed by Fancy Pants.

GERARD DUBOIS

OPENED RECENTLY

Amadeus—From London, a revival of Peter Shaffer's drama, starring Michael Sheen as Mozart and David Suchet as Salieri. Sir Peter Hall is the director. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Annie Body in Ambiguity—A multimedia one-woman comedy about cyberspace, written and performed by Carol Bradley. (Trilogy, 341 W. 44th St. 965-4827. Closes Feb. 6.)

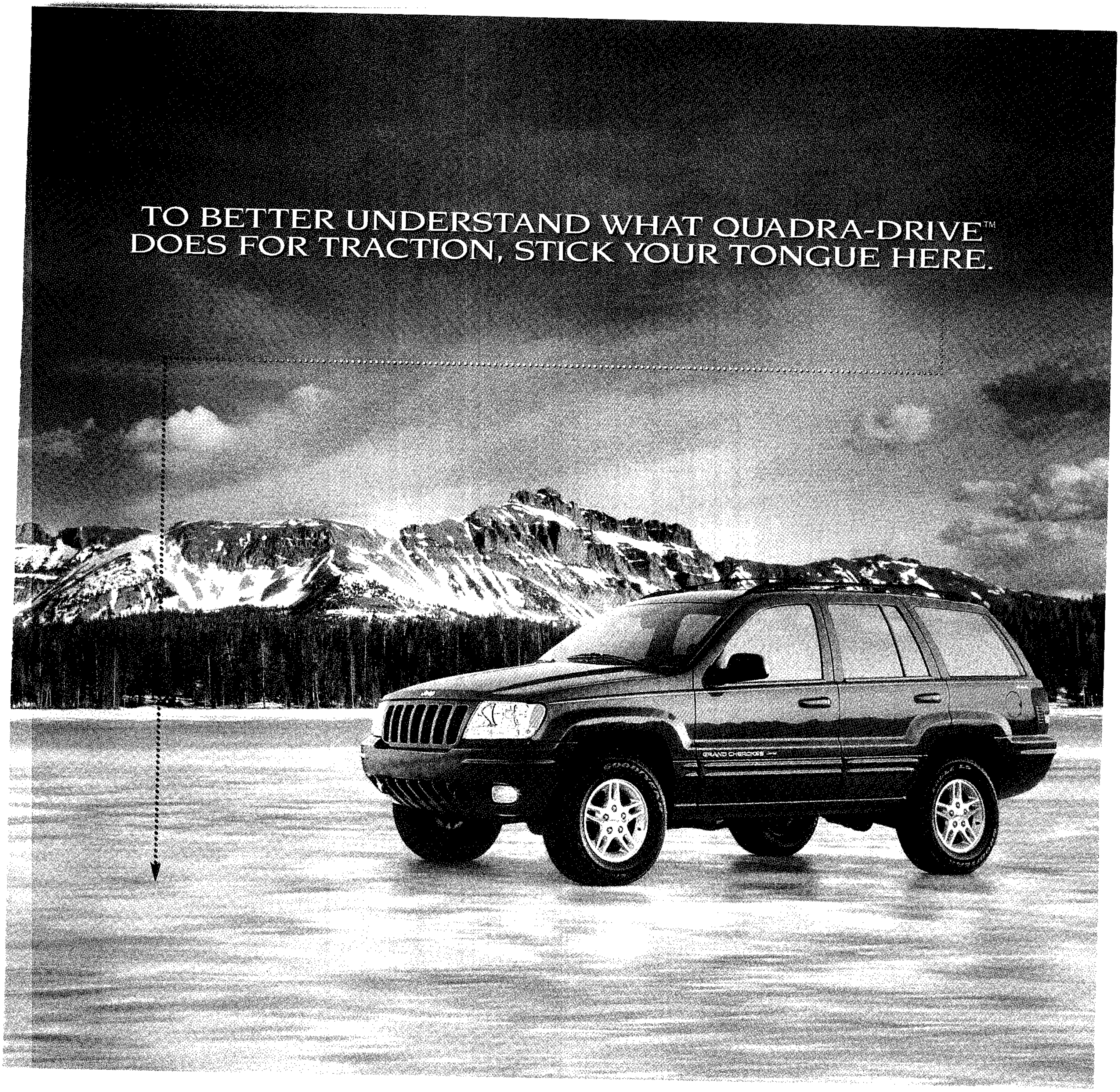
The Black Milk Quartet—A foursome of music-theatre pieces about the perils of passion, by Gina Leishman, Ellen Maddow, Harry Mann, and Dan Froot. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 696-8594. Closes Feb. 6.)

The Bomb-Itty of Errors—In this exuberant take on "The Comedy of Errors," the action has been shifted to a hip-hop realm, but the basic ideas—separated twins, mistaken identity, love at first sight—remain the same. Like the Shakespeare original, "Bomb-Itty" is witty, lewd, allusive, and chaotic, and it plays fast and loose with stereotypes, but the four extravagantly talented writer-actors (who play all of the parts) make it seem altogether new. Their enthusiasm for the material is infectious, as they bounce antically from role to role like pinballs, rapping merrily all the way. Think "The Beastie Boys from Syracuse." (45 Bleecker, 45 Bleecker St., at Lafayette St. 307-4100.)

Dame Edna: The Royal Tour—Former housewife turned international entertainer Dame Edna Everage (the sublime comic creation of the Australian Dadaist and dandy Barry Humphries) is, to adopt her penchant for alliteration, a virago of vitriol, a harpy of happiness, a megastar of maliciousness. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/1/99.) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Dinner with Friends—Donald Margulies's new play concerns two upper-middle-class couples who have been married for a dozen or so years; one of them survives the wear and tear of marriage, and the other doesn't. It's a perceptive depiction of the mystery and the mundanity of marriage, and the cast give well-rounded performances. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. (Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave., at 14th St. 239-6200.)

Dirty Blonde—Claudia Shear ("Blown Sideways Through Life") stars in a play she wrote, about two single New Yorkers who meet at the grave of Mae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West. (Reviewed in this issue.) (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475. Closes Feb. 13.)

Fully Committed—This hilarious one-man comedy, a tribute to starving actors slaving away in the restaurant "industry" in order to make ends meet, has reopened at a new theatre. Mark Setlock plays a lovable reservations clerk at an unnamed tony Manhattan restaurant, who deals with the daily deluge of calls from dying-to-be-guests. Developed by Setlock and the playwright Becky Mode. (Cherry Lane Theatre, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.)

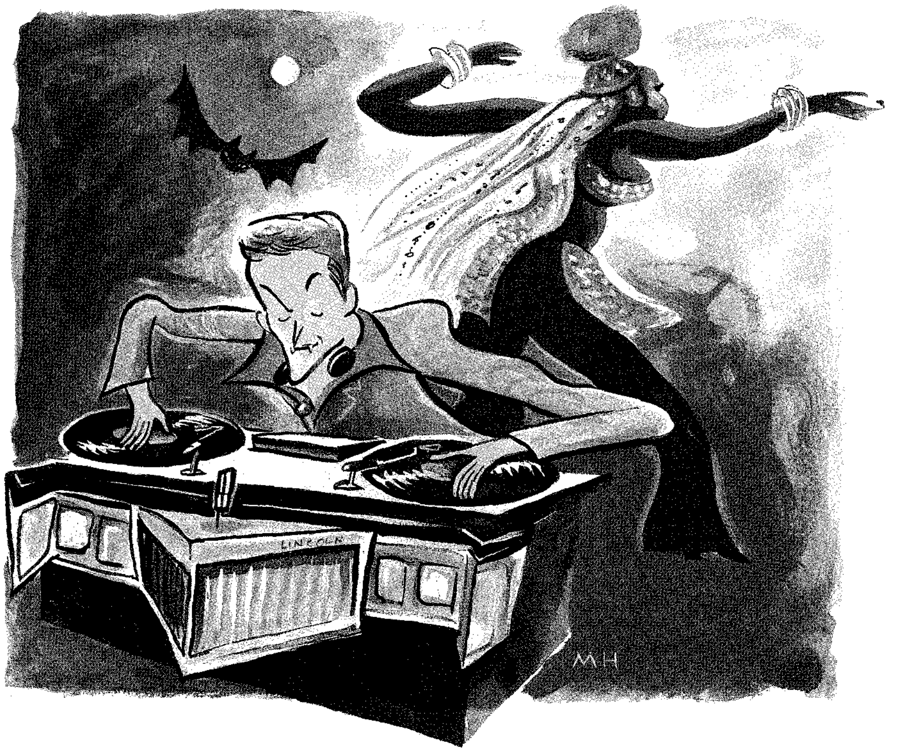
Hundreds of Sisters & One Big Brother—Deborah Swisher portrays ten characters in her autobiographical one-woman play, which looks back on her childhood experiences in a California commune. (Harold Clurman, 412 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Stokes Mitchell, are expert players, but they are not—in the true meaning of the words—star performers, the kind who bring something larger than life to musical stories. (11/29/99) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Lady/Speak/Easy—A jazz play by Sean Power, which traces a day in the life of Billie Holiday (Bemshi Shearer). (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710. Closes Feb. 13.)

The Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln—An adaptation of the seventeenth-century German-Jewish widow's recollections (the first known text in Yiddish by a woman). With music by Frank London, of the Klezmatics, and Adrienne Cooper and puppetry by Jenny Romaine. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710. Closes Feb. 13.)

The Merry Wives of Windsor—The Pearl Theatre Company's staging of Shakespeare's comedy. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)



"Night Vision: A New Third to First World Vampyre Opera," at HERE.

Imitation of Imitation of Life—The TWEED Fractured Classicks Series presents Lypsinka and Flotilla DeBarge, in a stage version of the 1934 film melodrama "Imitation of Life." (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 358-3436.)

Infrared—Mac Wellman's new play was inspired by Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market" and the stories of Edward Gorey. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-0051. Closes Feb. 5.)

Jackie Mason: Much Ado About Everything—The comic is back on Broadway with a new show. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

James Joyce's The Dead—Playwrights Horizons' musical version of the short story has moved to Broadway's Belasco Theatre for a limited-run encore engagement. (11/8/99) (111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

King John—From Theatre for a New Audience, Shakespeare's play, directed by Karin Coonrod. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200. Closes Feb. 20.)

Kiss Me, Kate—The hero of this revival of the Cole Porter musical—which represents the highest level of theatrical collaboration currently on Broadway—is the veteran British director Michael Blakemore. With all its admirable expertise and its various delights, though, the production is oddly earthbound: it comes down to the vexing issue of chemistry. The leads, Marin Mazzie and Brian

Night Vision: A New Third to First World Vampyre Opera—A two-thousand-year-old vampire takes the pop-music world by storm, in an Afro-Asian jazz musical by Fred Ho (music) and Ruth Margraff (book and lyrics). (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

North Atlantic—The Wooster Group's multimedia play, set aboard an aircraft carrier during the Cold War. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 966-3651.)

Our Sinatra—A revue of the songs of Frank, starring Eric Comstock, Christopher Gines, and Hilary Kole. (Blue Angel, 323 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

The Price—In Arthur Miller's 1968 play, a failed, dutiful brother, who thinks that life has given him a bad deal, cuts another bad deal, this time with a furniture dealer. But when his successful sibling turns up, the play becomes a negotiation about their family history, an agreement that can't be reached. As the rivalry is played out, the audience watches the riveting spectacle of a man clinging to a self-destructive illusion, despite all evidence to the contrary. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Putting It Together—A revue celebrating the songs of Stephen Sondheim, starring Carol Burnett. Directed by Eric D. Schaeffer. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200. Closes Feb. 20.)

MARCELLUS HALL

Saturday Night Fever—The musical, based on the 1977 film. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

Sexual Perversity in Chicago—The Atlantic Theatre Company's all-Mamet season continues with the playwright's 1976 comedy, accompanied by his 1976 one-act "Duck Variations." (336 W. 20th St. 645-1242. Closes Feb. 6.)

Swing!—A musical salute to the genre, directed and choreographed by Lynne Taylor-Corbett. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Teahouse of the August Moon—John Patrick's play won all the awards (including a Pulitzer) back in the mid-fifties and was made into a film with Marlon Brando, but it hasn't seen much action for the last decade or two. The plot—American soldiers try to democratize a small Japanese village after the Second World War, and make it turn a profit—could easily come off as patronizing or precious, but this nimble update by the Pan Asian Rep brings out its gentle satire. Ernest Abuba's Sakini (he's the translator) is sly and quick with a quip, and his wry observations about the culture clash are the greatest of the production's many pleasures. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 279-4200. Closes Feb. 13.)

This Is a Test—Michael D. Conway's autobiographical one-man show about growing up in Texas, figuring out he's gay, and desperately wanting to be "normal!" is a funny, thoughtful meditation on the causes and consequences of his differentness. (If God doesn't make mistakes, as the young Michael was frequently told, where does that leave snakes, let alone gay men?) Conway never takes the easy way out by denigrating his upbringing. His show's structure parallels the arc of his life, deftly integrating the Texas childhood he lovingly describes with his adult years: he doesn't even raise the issue of his homosexuality until halfway through. (Sanford Meisner, 164 Eleventh Ave., at 22nd St. 613-1682.)

The Vagina Monologues—A one-woman show that Eve Ensler based on interviews she conducted with two hundred women about their vaginas. There's a certain amount of shtick involved, but most of the stories are touching and memorable. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

The Voysey Inheritance—The Mint Theatre presents an encore engagement of Harley Granville-Barker's 1905 drama. (311 W. 43rd St. 315-0231. Closes Feb. 13.)

Waiting in the Wings—In the best of Noël Coward's postwar plays, old gallant theatricals duke it out in a retirement home, where they fire off some terrific one-liners. Although the play itself is somewhat creaky, the pros who bring it to life here aren't: Bette Henritze, Elizabeth Wilson, Rosemary Harris, Dana Ivey, and the evergreen Lauren Bacall. But La Bacall is just too glamourous and too famous for the faded company her character keeps; the day she goes to the retirement home is the day gallstones become jewelry. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Wrong Mountain—A new play by David Hirson ("La Bête"). (Reviewed in this issue.) (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. Closes Feb. 5.)

LONG RUNS

ANNIE GET YOUR GUN: Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4747. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CABARET:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE COUNTESS:** Samuel Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 594-2826. . . . **DE LA GUARDA:** Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FOOTLOOSE:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **FOSSE:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LATE-NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LION KING:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS:** John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **SECRETS EVERY SMART TRAVELER SHOULD KNOW:** Ibis, 327 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **WIT:** Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.

DANCE

New York City Ballet—Feb. 2 at 8: "Serenade," "The Unanswered Question," and "Western Symphony." . . . ¶ Feb. 3 at 8: "Serenade," "The Beethoven Seventh," and "La Valse." . . . ¶ Feb. 4 at 8: "The Goldberg Variations," "Tarantella," and "Western Symphony." . . . ¶ Feb. 5 at 2: "The Goldberg Variations" and "Union Jack." . . . ¶ Feb. 5 at 8: "Serenade," "The Unanswered Question," and "Glass Pieces." . . . ¶ Feb. 6 at 3: "Glass Pieces," "The Unanswered Question," "Tarantella," and "Western Symphony." . . . ¶ Feb. 8 at 8: "Serenade," "Opus 19/The Dreamer," and "Stars and Stripes." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through Feb. 27.)

Colorado Ballet—The thirty-three-member company, under the direction of Martin Fredmann, performs "Façade," Frederick Ashton's homage to vaudeville, which includes deft tango sections choreographed by the onetime resident of Peru; "Of Blessed Memory," choreographed by Stanton Welch in honor of his ballerina mother; and "Picture of Sedalia," by the onetime Pilobolus dancer Peter Pucci. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Feb. 1-4 at 8, Feb. 5 at 2 and 8, and Feb. 6 at 2 and 7:30.)

"Don't Stop Till You Get Enough"—The former Doug Elkins dancer Ben Munisteri chats and dances in works that take a teasing look at venery: "I Am a Present from God to You," "F*** My Time Index," "Smash Through to Sunlight," and the post-Catholic "Lust Is a Pig, Wallowing and Grovelling in Mud and Filth." (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at Ninth St. 477-5288. Feb. 3-6 at 8:30.)

"Leonard and Minky"—The swaggering American Ballet Theatre dancer and choreographer John Selya joins forces with composer Joel Diamond for a full-length ballet about the romance between a clumsy tomcat who believes he's a conductor and a shameless, street-smart kitten with a sizable fan club. Ed Koch appears, on tape, as the narrator. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Feb. 3-5 at 8 and Feb. 6 at 3. Through Feb. 13.)

"Collected Duets"—The diminutive Jessica Nicoll and the towering Barry Oreck perform duets created for them by Ann Carlson, Gerrie Glover, Beth Leonard, and Pamela Harling. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Feb. 4-6 at 8:30.)

"Triple Play Dance"—Three companies, Creach/Company, Doug Elkins Dance Company, and Paradigm (made up of Gus Solomons, Jr., Carmen de Lavallade, and Dudley Williams), offer two programs of works. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Feb. 3-5 at 8 and Feb. 6 at 3.)

St. Petersburg Ballet Theatre—Selections by Petipa and Fokine from the Russian troupe under the direction of Konstantine Tachkine. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. Feb. 4 at 8.)

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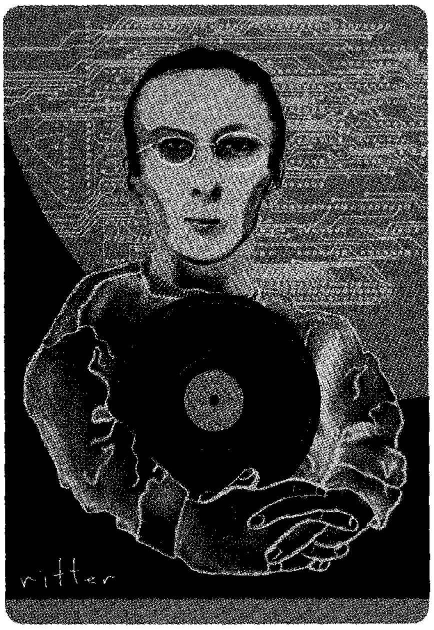
NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Ibrahim Ferrer and Rubén González—A double bill of key players from the Buena Vista Social Club. Ferrer, a singer who has been called the Nat (King) Cole of Cuba, will lead his orchestra, and the fiery octogenarian pianist González will be backed by his own band. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Feb. 4-5 at 8.)



U-Ziq, at the Bowery Ballroom.

JOHN RITTER

The Ron Horton Sextet—If you've investigated any of the super-smart live projects or recordings by the Jazz Composers Collective, then you've most likely heard trumpeter Horton. A tart-toned modernist who has also graced the bands of Jane Ira Bloom, Horton will be presenting original compositions from his compelling opus "Genius Envy." (Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. 708-9480. Feb. 4 at 5:30.)

World Music Institute's 15th Anniversary Benefit—The Institute, which continues to voraciously champion exotic sounds from a wide variety of meridians, is one of New York City's finest unsung organizations. In the past, it's helped expose such singular artists as the great African diva Oumou Sangare and the late Pakistani singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. For this show, the awe-inspiring Moroccan singer Hassan Hakmoun, the Indian tabla player Zakir Hussain, oud master Simon Shaheen, clarinettist Andy Statman, percussionist Glen Velez, and other musicians gather to celebrate the Institute's continued growth. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Feb. 5 at 8.)

Weird Al Yankovic—The accordion-playing, polka-loving, frizzy-haired pop jester has skewered such high-profile stars as Madonna ("Like a Surgeon"), Joan Jett ("I Love Rocky Road"), and Michael Jackson (a pair of parodies, "Fat" and "Eat It," that are arguably his masterpieces). Onstage, he sometimes re-creates scenes from his wacky videos. (Beacon Theatre. Feb. 6 at 8.)

CLUBS

(Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Feb. 4: **cork,** the jam-happy blues-rock band formed by ex-Spin Doctors guitarist Eric Schenkman and former Mountain drummer Corky Laing. Feb. 5: A night of sterling new folk, with the accomplished singer and songwriter **cliff eberhardt** and the **kennedys,** a D.C.-based husband-and-wife team that spent several years playing in Nanci Griffith's band before embarking on a well-regarded career of their own.

Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Feb. 2: **u-ziq** is the nom de knob of Michael Paradinas, a twenty-eight-year-old Londoner who has turned out some of the most creative and experimental electronica of the last decade. Paradinas was trained as an architect, and his background shows in his carefully constructed compositions. His latest release, "Royal Astronomy," is a lushly orchestrated opus that conjures up the atmosphere of a sideshow fun house. With Astralwerks labelmates **luke vibert and bj cole,** who are one of electronica's more interesting lineups. Vibert is a veteran producer, and Cole is an adroit slide guitarist; together, they make amusing music.

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Feb. 4: **c. j. chenier,** son of the legendary zydeco accordionist Clifton Chenier, straps on his father's old fifty-pound piano-key accordion and leads his Red Hot Louisiana Band through a repertory of waltzes, two-steps, and joist-shaking rhythms. Feb. 5: The sharp, scratchy guitar-playing of veteran **hubert sumlin,** who played in Howlin' Wolf's band for twenty years.

The Cooler, 416 W. 14th St. (229-0785)—Feb. 4: Before Portishead, Tricky, and Massive Attack secured shelf space at chain record stores across the country, **smith & mighty** were hard at work in Bristol pioneering down-tempo trip-hop. A legal snarl with a major label kept the group from releasing any albums in the early nineties, but they did manage to put out the seminal "Bass Is Maternal" on their own in 1995. Their recent follow-up, "Big World Small World," is an ambitious combination of reggae, break beats, and politics. Trip-hop's moment may be past, but Smith & Mighty remain relevant.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Feb. 4-5: **joe mcginty's loser's lounge** deconstructs the music of Queen—an exercise that may or may not be on your list of cultural imperatives. The **mingus big band** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Feb. 3: **steel pulse,** the first reggae band to perform at Presidental inauguration festivities (someone in the Clinton Administration *must* have inhaled). This Birmingham, England, outfit has turned out more than a dozen albums over the past two decades, but it is best experienced live, where gravelly vocalist David Hinds turns even the most strident polemic into a party. Feb. 5: **culture,** the veteran Jamaican vocal trio led by Joseph Hill.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Feb. 2: **kelly joe phelps** is a lapsed jazz guitarist who now plays acoustic country blues. His slide work smolders, and the loose, cooled-ash quality of his voice brings an eerie quality to both his original lyrics and his classic-blues covers. With singer-songwriter **stacey earle.** Feb. 4: A night of Jon Spenseresque retro blues-rock with **the delta 72,** powered by the wild Hammond-organ antics of Mark Boyce. Feb. 5: Folk and blues legend **odetta,** who has finally received a Grammy nomination after fifty years in the business. With her friend from the early days of the Greenwich Village folk scene, singer-songwriter **dave van ronk,** whose finger-picking is a marvel to behold.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—Feb. 2: A night of Brooklyn-based bands, including **matthew caus, folksongs for the afterlife, saturnine,** and **champale.** Feb. 5: **the delta 72** (see the Knitting Factory). Feb. 6: **crooked fingers,** Archers of Loaf vocalist Eric Bachman's latest project.

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Feb. 5: Fans of sophomoric novelty rock will be cheered by the news that former Dead Milkmen guitarist Joe Genaro has put together the band **butterfly joe.** You can never go home to the big lizard in your backyard, but it's also reassuring to know that some people will never grow up.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Feb. 3-5: The **dave liebman** quartet. Having been exclusively associated with the soprano saxophone since the seventies, Leibman has lately been seen (and heard) in the company of his first love, the tenor saxophone. One of the very few players to bring his own voice to the sorely abused soprano, Leibman will no doubt fashion a distinct vocabulary on the larger horn. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Feb. 6: The **michael brecker** quartet. "Time Is of the Essence," Brecker's most recent album, has a few distinct advantages in its star-studded personnel, which includes drummers Elvin Jones and Jeff (Tain) Watts and guitarist Pat Metheny. But Brecker himself has

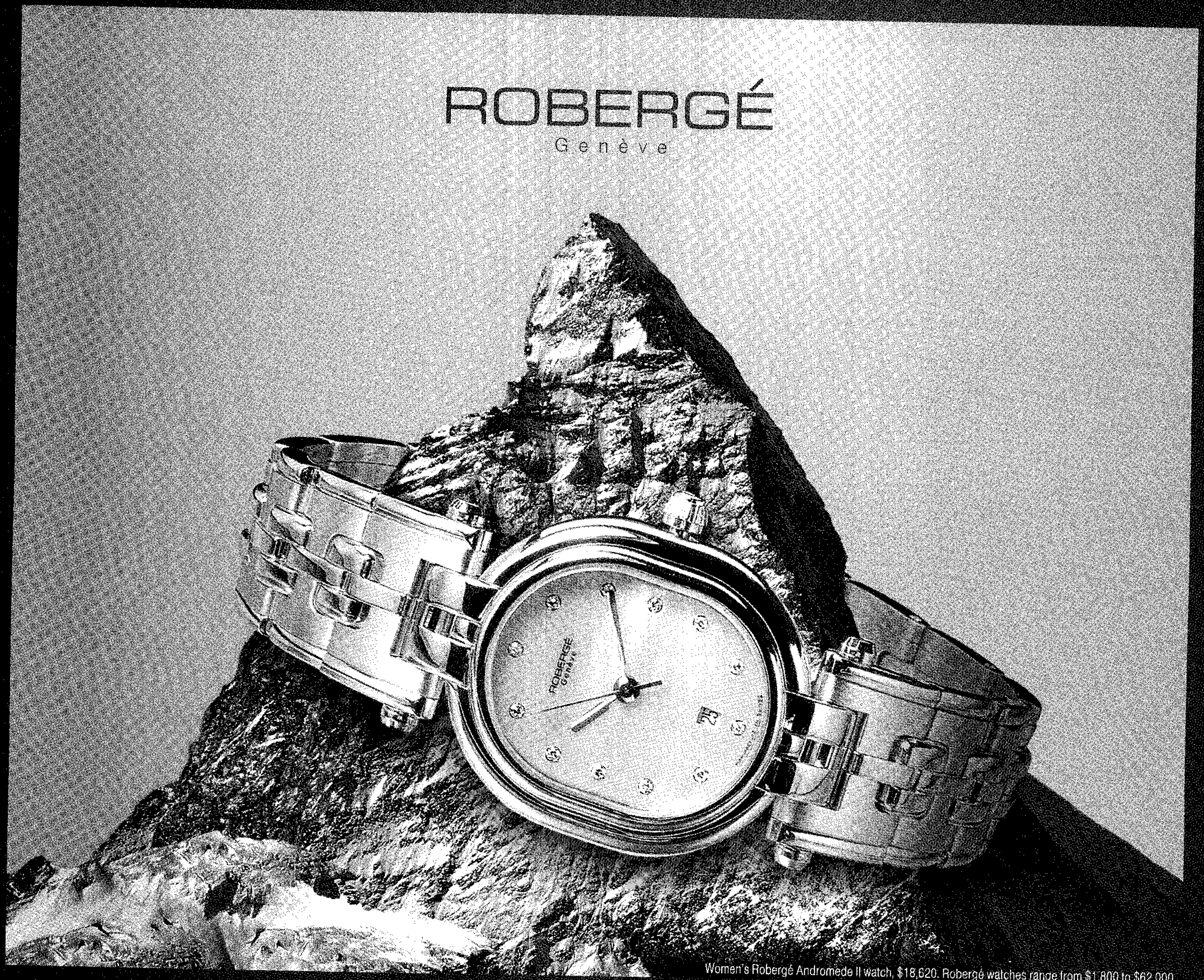
POP NOTES

Songs from the Film—It used to be that soundtrack albums were merely post-wrap marketing tools, but recently the relationship between films and their albums has grown more substantive. The songs on a few new soundtracks even helped to get the cameras rolling.

The writer and director Paul Thomas Anderson credits Aimee Mann's knotty, keen pop songs about the fault lines between lovers as the inspiration for his new Altmanesque film **Magnolia.** He should be commended for his taste. In the songs Mann wrote for the soundtrack (Reprise), doubts and weaknesses are crystallized in intensely self-analytical lyrics: "For the sake of momentum," she sings, "I have allowed my fears to get larger than life." The new songs are unfortunately diluted by a pair of instrumentals and two Supertramp tracks that should have been left in the seventies. Still, Mann, with her superbly willowy sound, is capable of a stinging honesty.

Norman Jewison's **The Hurricane** tries to capture the force of Bob Dylan's propulsive broadside about the wrongfully convicted boxer Rubin (Hurricane) Carter. The desire to reintroduce Dylan's classic to a new generation is admirable, but the "Hurricane" album (MCA) goes astray. It opens with a new rap version of the title song by the Roots; while they are perhaps the best live hip-hop band working today, their "Hurricane" doesn't do them justice. Dylan fills his narrative with terrifyingly real details, down to the names of actual participants. The Roots attempt to evoke Carter's state of mind, and the result is underwhelming. The rest of the soundtrack ranges from R. & B. both new (the Jazzyfatnastees' smooth "I Don't Know") and old (Etta James's scorching "In the Basement") to works with more overt political content (Gil Scott-Heron's "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised").

The soundtrack album to HBO's **The Sopranos** (Columbia) is much more than a hastily assembled collection of hits. Purposeful and powerful, it relies on sinewy blues-rock, from sixties chestnuts like Them's "Mystic Eyes" and Cream's "I Feel Free" to more recent efforts like A3's "Woke Up This Morning" and R. L. Burnside's "It's Bad You Know," both of which modernize the blues with distorted vocals and menacing electronic bleeps. Elsewhere, a New Jersey state of mind prevails—Sinatra juxtaposed with Springsteen. The standouts are a pair of tracks by old pals Elvis Costello and Nick Lowe which bristle, like the television series, with clever wordplay, scabrous bursts of humor, and barely concealed violence.



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Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through Feb. 12, the amazing **EARTHA KITT.**

Feinstein's at the Regency, 540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (339-4095)—Through Feb. 14: The **JOHN PIZZARELLI** trio, with special guest **BUCKY PIZZARELLI.**

Iridium, 48 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Some fifty years into an unassuming yet brilliant career, pianist **HANK JONES** (here with his trio through Feb. 6) has become a contemporary version of his early model, Teddy Wilson: each silken phrase is guaranteed to be perfect in form and diction. But Jones's ambition and repertoire continue to expand. He's long practiced an elegant mélange of preswing, swing, and bop phraseology, and his continuing collaboration with younger players is proof of his commitment to stay on his toes. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **LES PAUL.**

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—Feb. 2-5: A sturdy team player for trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie during the nineteen-seventies, pianist **MIKE LONGO** has never gotten the recognition he deserves, the price paid by many tasteful support players. His gig-mate, bassist **BEN BROWN,** has added his warm sound to many Jimmy Heath ensembles.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Feb. 3-6: **JOE** and **MAT MANERI.** Avant jazz hadn't seen too many father-and-son acts before the Maneris hit the scene a few years back, but by now this intrepid family has established a downtown beachhead all their own. Father Joe preaches the gospel of microtonality as the jazz vocabulary of the future; his violinist son, Mat, has joined the elder saxophonist and clarinettist in spreading the word. Both men are intensely committed to a musical vision that few others are courageous enough to consider, let alone attempt to play, yet a few brave souls, including the acclaimed trombonist **RAY ANDERSON** (on Feb. 3), join the daring Maneris throughout the week. The results should be fascinating, if not wholly familiar. Feb. 7: The San Francisco trio **WHAT WE LIVE** is joined by downtown trumpeter extraordinaire **DAVE DOUGLAS.** At the late show Douglas cedes his chair to the jazz cellist of the moment, **ERIC FRIEDLANDER.**

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through Feb. 6: The **WINARD HARPER** group. Harper was the drum-playing sibling in the Harper Brothers, one of the first neo-traditional jazz bands to gain attention. Now a veteran, and playing better than ever, he's sure to have some eager young players on the bandstand looking for wisdom, direction, and rhythmic sass.

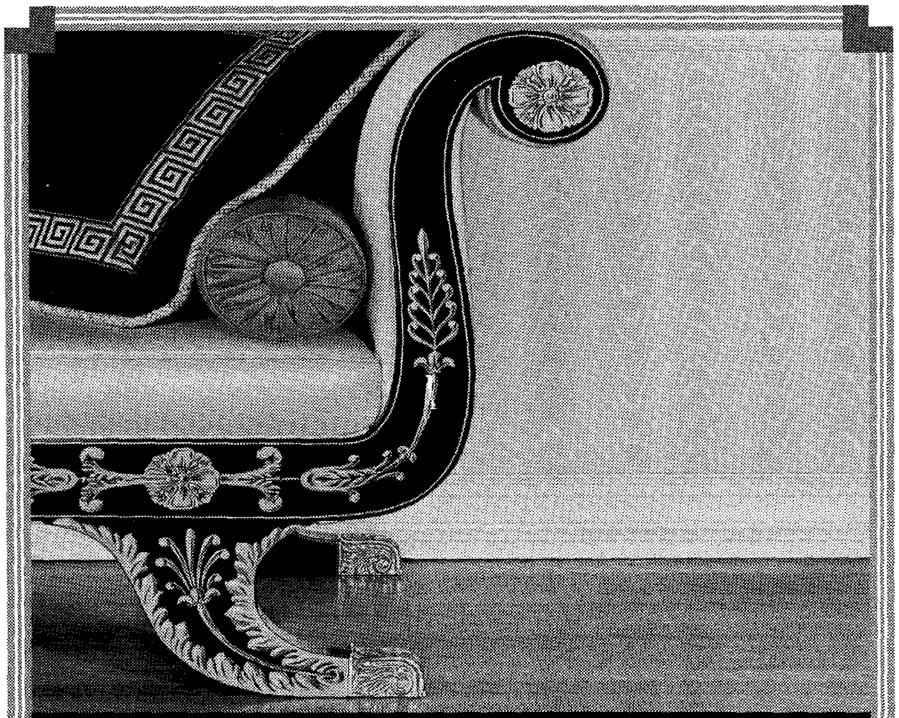
Up Over Jazz Cafe, 351 Flatbush Ave., at Seventh Ave., Brooklyn (718-398-5413)—Feb. 4-5: The **ORRIN EVANS** trio. This is a great chance to check out one of the city's more acclaimed young pianists in a low-key, intimate setting.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Try this for a parlor game: name two jazz artists of the past four decades that bassist **BUSTER WILLIAMS** (here through Feb. 6) hasn't played with. Good luck. The ubiquitous virtuoso will have vibraphonist **STEFON HARRIS** and pianist **MULGREW MILLER** on hand to help generate sparks. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—The Walker Evans retrospective presents a hundred and seventy-five photographs, including examples of his documentary work in nineteen-thirties Cuba and in the New Deal South, his photo essays for *Fortune,* and his images of New York City subway riders. Through May 14. . . . ¶ "The World of Scholars' Rocks: Gardens, Studios, and Paintings" offers more than thirty stones, some as small as paperweights, others as large as boulders, and nearly a hundred paintings that include such rocks, which were prized in the Song dynasty. Through Aug. 20. . . . ¶ "Only the Best," the title of an exhibition of eighty works from the Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon, may sound like fatuous P.R., but the show makes good on its promise. The founder of the collection, the Armenian oil magnate Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian (1869-1955), known as Mr. Five Percent for the fee he retained for helping reorganize oil companies in the Middle East, began collecting as a child, starting with antique coins; by the time of his death he had amassed a princely trove of nearly six thousand works of art, from the ancient Egyptians to the Impressionists. Gulbenkian didn't have an adventurous eye, but he certainly had a discriminating one. The show's many highlights include examples of Ming porcelain, Turkish carpets, and rococo silver, as well as exceptional paintings by Watteau, Fragonard, Rubens, Gainsborough, Turner, and Manet. It's almost a relief to find a few pieces, such as a bland life-size statue of Apollo by Houdon, that are second-rate. Through Feb. 27. . . . ¶ From Elvis Presley's gold lamé suit, visibly worn at the knees, to the varied sartorial inspirations of Mick, Cher, Diana, and Sonny, "Rock Style" at the Costume Institute offers an adoring MTV-style walk down Golden Oldie Lane. Among the notable outfits is the magnificently weird jumpsuit of quilted vinyl worn by David Bowie for his "Ziggy Stardust" tour. Designed by Kansai Yamamoto but



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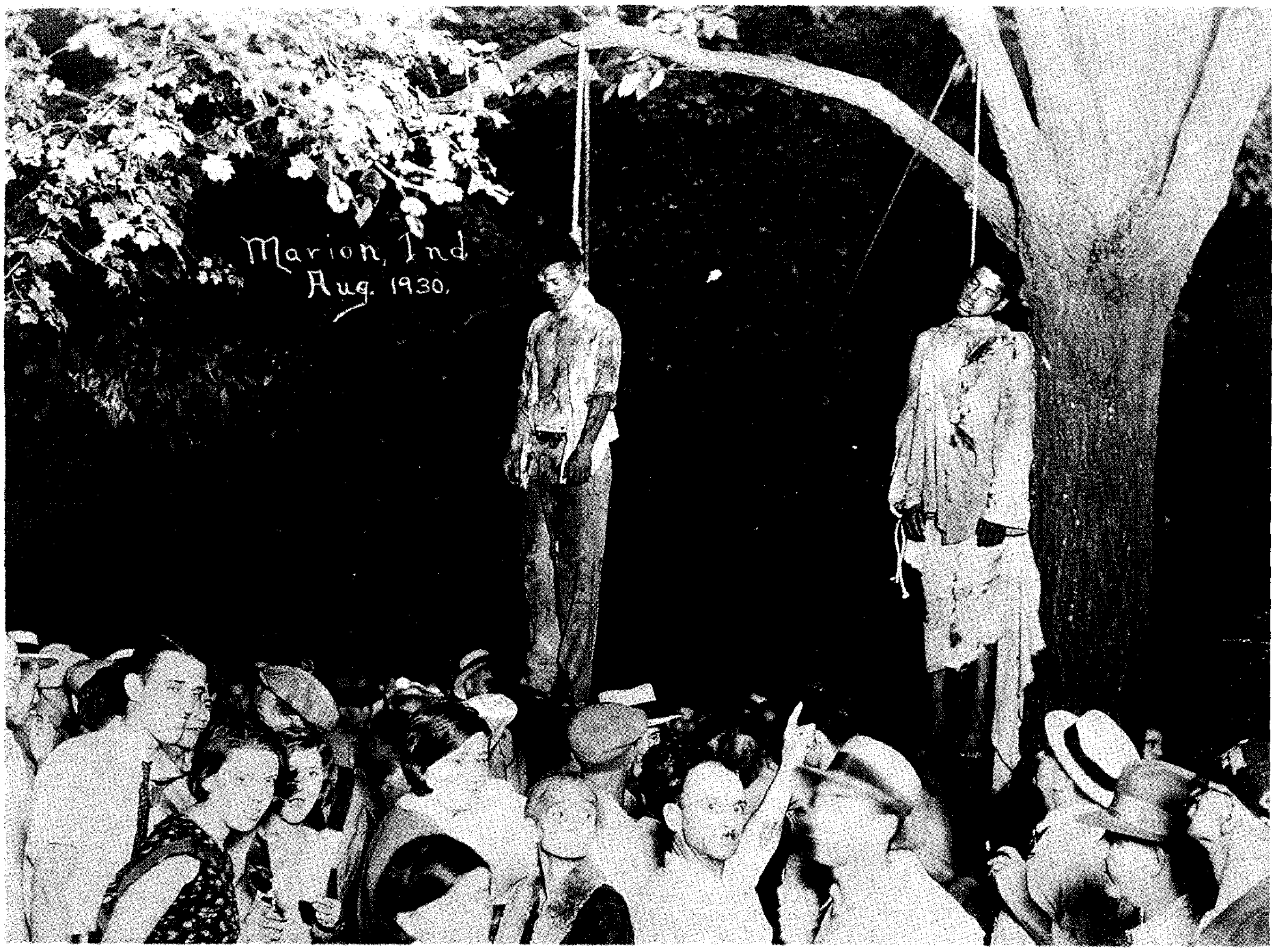

"AT THE HANDS OF UNKNOWN PARTIES": *Tens of thousands of black men, women, and children were hanged, burned, shot, or tortured to death by mobs in the United States between 1882 and 1968; of these crimes, only the tiniest fraction were ever investigated by grand juries. "Witness," at the Roth Horowitz gallery, presents sixty small images of this savage legacy, from the collection of James Allen and John Littlefield (the pictures are also included in the new book "Without Sanctuary"). The photograph above shows the lynchings of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith, in 1930. The girls on the left hold ripped swatches of the victims' clothing as "souvenirs." The image itself, taken by a Marion, Indiana, studio photographer, became a souvenir fifty thousand times over, at fifty cents apiece.*

clearly inspired by early Frank Stella, it's a sort of theatrically hermaphroditic incarnation of sixties minimalism. Other highlights include dresses made from turquoise ostrich feathers (Cher) and razor blades (Deborah Harry), along with Madonna's ever-provocative pinnacled bodices. After so much gaudiness, the real shocker is a mannequin dressed, in retail flannel and black denim, as Bruce Springsteen. Through March 19. . . . ¶ "Sean Scully on Paper." Through March 12. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)— "Places" and "Things," two parts of the tripartite "Modern Starts" exhibition, featuring works drawn from MOMA's permanent collection, all focussed on the years 1880-1920, continue through March 14. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—Selections from the permanent collection are on display. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Part two of "The American Century" is a vast improvement over its predecessor, and not just because American art gathered momentum after the Second World War. The exhibition design, as a whole, is clearer: film clips and "historical" displays have been segregated to small side rooms so they don't compete directly with the nearly seven hundred art works. On the upper floors, curator Lisa Phillips succeeds in making a familiar story fresh. The Abstract Expressionist gallery is strong, and the appearance of a Chuck Close portrait in a room devoted to minimalism is smartly provocative. Only in the later rooms do the skewed priorities and omissions begin to become apparent. From this show you could learn a lot about sitcoms of the seventies, but you would never know, for example, that the decade witnessed a significant revival of representational painting. The exhibition ends with a whimper: can the nineties really have been this sterile? Through Feb. 13. (Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—*National Geographic* meets the East Village in "Body Art: Marks of Identity," which features pre-Columbian nose ornaments from Peru next to contemporary photographs of the pierced and tattooed natives of New York and San Francisco. Through May 29. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Eastman Johnson: Painting America" is a fascinating retrospective exhibition, the first in more than twenty-five years, of Winslow Homer's greatest rival. Through Feb. 6. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (423-3200)—Kaiser Wilhelm II was a notorious killjoy, but the era named after him saw a giddy efflorescence of artistic, theatrical, and literary innovation, admirably surveyed in "Berlin Metropolis: Jews and the New Culture, 1880-1914." German Jews, excluded from government, the military, and the universities, played a major role in these developments, from the Berlin Secession of 1899 to the beginning of the film industry. There's a lot here (more than two hundred and fifty objects are on display, from paintings, posters, and film clips to vitrines full of memorabilia), but curator Emily D. Bilski has kept urban sprawl in check by focussing on the lives of a few prominent individuals such as Max Liebermann, Herwalth Walden, and Ernst Lubitsch. There are a few odd gaps (only one painting by the young

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AUCTIONS

(detail)
Ella Fitzgerald and Dizzy Gillespie at the Savoy Ballroom, silver print, c. 1937, printed later. At auction Feb 17.

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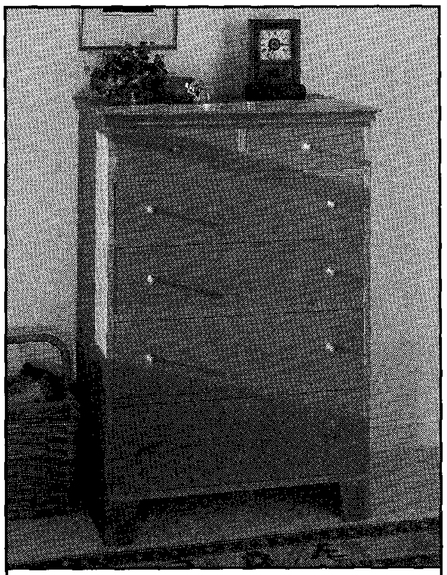

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Max Beckmann?), but this is a festive, cogent show. Through April 23. . . . ¶ "John Singer Sargent: Portraits of the Wertheimer Family." Through Feb. 6. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

THE NEW MUSEUM, 583 Broadway (219-1222)—If you associate interactivity with the glow of your computer screen, then this retrospective of works by the influential Brazilian artist Cildo Meireles will be an eye-opening—not to mention sock-and-shoe-removing—experience. "Red Shift" is a three-room installation created in response to Brazil's reign of terror in the late sixties. It ends on a note of goopy melodrama, with a sink askew on a wall, its tap flowing red. More effective is the poetic, frightening "Volatile," which takes you barefoot (follow instructions, please) through a darkened J-shaped chamber lit by a single flame and filled with several tons of gray talc and the smell of natural gas. Through March 5. (Open Wednesdays and Sundays, noon to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, noon to 8.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. (873-3400)—"Masterworks of 19th-Century American Painting" presents a rich representation of national taste in the decades prior to the Gilded Age, when the Society was the city's leading art institution. In an elegant, newly refurbished hall, portraits, landscapes, battle scenes, and allegorical pictures hang in the period's popular all-over salon style. Among the gems on view are Frederic Edwin Church's "Cayambe," a lush equatorial landscape complete with pre-Columbian ruins and a snow-capped volcano, and Albert Bierstadt's "Autumn Woods," a brilliant if restrained study of crisply colored fall. Other seminal artists included in this permanent installation are Thomas Cole, Rembrandt Peale, William Sidney Mount, John Trumbull, and Asher B. Durand. . . . ¶ "$24: The Legendary Deal for Manhattan" investigates the infamous purchase of the island in 1626 by the Dutch from Lenape inhabitants for goods valued at an estimated sixty guilders—twenty-four dollars to the rest of us. Featuring historic prints, maps, wampum, and appropriately grandiloquent artist's representations of the deal, the exhibition searches for the truth behind the legend. Through March 9. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5.)

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (869-8089)—"Seeing Is Believing" is a lavish, eclectic exhibition of scientific and medical illustrations, from the Middle Ages to the early twentieth century. Among the most spectacular works are Robert Hooke's "Micrographia" (the first book devoted to microscopic observations), open to a centerfold of a gigantic flea, and Andreas Vesalius's great anatomy textbook, "De Humani Corporis Fabrica," with its heroic flayed-muscle figures, believed to have been drawn by the studio of Titian. Much of what's on view is deliciously gruesome and fanciful. Through Feb. 19. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 7:30.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

JAMES COLEMAN—Coleman's work requires patience; it's not the kind of thing that you can take in as you stroll by casually. But if you're blessed with a longer attention span, watch the untitled film projection in the front gallery: a doctor, shown in lush Technicolor, starts slumped over a table and moves, in staccato increments, to a seated position seventeen minutes later, by which point the image has changed into the grainy black-and-white of a historical photograph. The Irish artist's work is dense, even insular, and not for the MTV-minded, though the sequinned costumes and eyeliner on the kids in the slide installation "Photographs" could fool you. Through Feb. 19. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160.)

DAVID HUMPHREY—Imagine a sex-crazed cartoonist doodling on a malfunctioning television screen and you have a fair picture of this talented painter's latest works. They're awash in visuals drawn from such varied sources as family photographs, perfume ads, wallpaper patterns, and Internet porn. Humphrey's glutted surrealism is appealingly playful, but it can also seem disconnected and hermetic—which is why the strongest images here are often the simplest. "Waders," for example, shows a kaleidoscopic pair of figures, up to their ankles in swirling rainbow-colored water. The style is a mélange of modernist sources, from Max Ernst to de Kooning. The subject, however, is quintessential Club Med. Through Feb. 5. (McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 688-5951.)

SHORT LIST—DAVID HUNTER, Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 223-2227. Through Feb. 12. . . . **MARTIN KLINE,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900. Through Feb. 19. . . . **DAMIAN LOEB,** Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 752-2929. Through Feb. 12. . . . **JACKSON POLLOCK,** Washburn, 20 W. 57th St. 397-6780. Through Feb. 26. . . . **RON SCHWERIN,** Stone, 113 E. 90th St. 987-4997. Through Feb. 29. . . . **ANTONI TÀPIES,** Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292. Through Feb. 12.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

LEO DE GOEDE—Pattern paintings, executed with bright colors, diligence, and a determined lack of imagination. In one group of works, the artist selects plywood panels with pretty grain markings, which he then renders in reds, blues, yellows, and greens, creating something like a lumberyard version of Clifford Still. In another group, he applies the same color-by-number strategy to whooshy marbleized designs. Both would make terrific screen savers. Through Feb. 5. (Kasmin, 293 Tenth Ave., at 27th St. 563-4474.)

TIM GARDNER—Watercolors so deft you might mistake them for the snapshots on which they're based. The subject is male youth culture: less debauched than Larry Clark's kids, less clean-cut than those from "Dawson's Creek." To an eye accustomed to the pierced, tattooed, transgendered subcultures of New York, the bare-chested, beer-clutching boys here look downright exotic. Gardner's work occasionally verges on the sentimental, and the oil paintings in the back lack the immediacy of the watercolors. Still, this is one of the most interesting débuts in recent memory. Through Feb. 12. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121.)

SCOTT GRODESKY—A début show of paintings in reverse perspective. What should be a mechanical gimmick—the farther away objects are, the bigger Grodesky paints them—proves strangely fresh and compelling in these pale, tender paintings of a solitary woman, the artist's wife, sleeping, reading, and undressing. "Sara on the Bed," for example, is a steeply foreshortened view, like Mantegna's famous depiction of Christ. But instead of the tapering proportions we expect, we see tiny feet leading back to an enormous, tranquil head. Exploratory and unfamiliar, the image seems a beautifully apt emblem of intimacy. Through Feb. 19. (Baumgartner, 418 W. 15th St. 633-2276.)

JAMES HYDE—Unwilling to choose between painting and sculpture, this Brooklyn-based artist has been making wry, enigmatic objects for more than a decade. Here, he offers variations on a basic volumetric form: the pillow. The results are delicately comical, even when they are enormous. It's easy to imagine Hyde's "Massive Pillow," a linen behemoth painted in cool blues and rusts, as an Action painting that has ceased exercising, gorged on crumpled newspaper, and grown happily, hugely, plump. In the back room, Hyde has filled a wall with frescoes made on Styrofoam, paint-slathered fragments of carpet, and other teasing, pleasing oddities. Through Feb 12. (Sikkema, 530 W. 22nd St. 929-2262.)

Gayil Nalls—Despite stiff competition from conceptual artists around the globe, "World Sensorium" is perhaps the world's silliest art work. To create this formless "olfactory sculpture," the artist consulted with officials from two hundred and thirty countries, each of whom suggested a national scent. Nalls combined their suggestions (in the form of plant oils) in proportions that represent each country's share of the world population. The result? A fragrant, amber-colored beaker that has been endorsed by UNESCO and smells like jasmine (China, Algeria, Djibouti), with a strong undertone of lemon (Italy, Argentina, Lesotho) and a hint of pine (U.S.A.). Through Feb. 5. (Martz, 529 W. 20th St. 206-3686.)

Peter Rudolph—Cozy little nightmare paintings, in watercolor and gouache. Pustular pink creatures wander through volcanic landscapes, stick out their long tongues at each other, or watch TV alone. Except for their gaping, cartoony mouths, these creatures are formless sacks, full of angst and grief. Why, then, is it so hard to resist chortling over their misery? Like Carroll Dunham, Rudolph conjures up a landscape so bleak that it feels perversely cheering. Through Feb. 5. (Eller, 529 W. 20th St. 206-6411.)

Short List—**MARTIN CREED,** Gavin Brown's Enterprise, 436 W. 15th St. 627-5258. Through Feb. 12. . . . **TODD EBERLE** and **HARRY BERTOIA,** Robert Miller, 526 W. 26th St. 366-4774. Both shows through Feb. 26. . . . **MATT ERNST,** Billis, 526 W. 26th St. 645-2621. Through Feb. 19. . . . **PERRY HOBERMAN,** Postmasters, 459 W. 19th St. 727-3323. Through Feb. 19. . . . **ALLEN RUPPERSBERG,** Burgin, 243 W. 18th St. 462-2668. Through Feb. 5. . . . **BETTY WOODMAN,** Protetch, 511 W. 22nd St. 633-6999. Through Feb. 12. . . . **CARRIE YAMAOKA,** Debs, 525 W. 26th St. 643-2070. Through Feb. 13.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Cecily Brown—With her brash candor, sultry good looks, and illustrious parentage (she's the illegitimate daughter of the eminent English art critic David Sylvester), this young painter is already getting more than her share of press. To top it all off, her recent paintings have been big, salacious, and perversely traditional—like a cross between an *Orgy* magazine centerfold and a fifties de Kooning. This show, however, marks a brave, if not particularly successful, leap backward for Brown. Apart from a few glimpses of copulating bodies, the new canvases are smutless fields of Abstract Expressionist brushwork. With their crinkly flecks and rivulets of color, they seem strangely generic, handsome, and surpriseless. Through Feb. 19. (Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. 228-2828.)

Jason Dodge—Walking into this show, you may feel as though you've stumbled into a scene from "Last Year at Marienbad." Five sculptural installations, all set in a fictional palace hotel in France, present traces of recent activity—a zebra-wood Ping-Pong table strewn with abandoned glasses, a lion's skin littered with mints, receipts, and Hope cigarettes. But the object of desire, presumably a woman, is conspicuously absent. There's a seductive elegance to the objects, but the obsession with life style (Burberry plaid on sunbathing cushions) smacks of art for the *Wallpaper* generation. Through Feb. 12. (Kaplan, 48 Greene St. 226-6131.)

Sue de Beer and Laura Parnes—The artists have teamed up to make a sequel ("Heidi 2") to Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy's collaborative video. The puppet-show-cum-horror-flick aesthetic of the original work remains intact in this two-channel tape, projected on adjacent walls in a room car-

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The Los Angeles Times on Samantha Dunn's FAILING PARTS: "Such fierce control over her material, coupled with feeling and beauty of language, makes FAILING PARTS the successful debut that it is. By giving us exactly enough, Dunn makes us wish there were more."

The Times (London) on Austen Kark's THE FORWARD PLACEMENT: "Fast moving and utterly intriguing throughout... As fresh as a new gun wound."

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peted with Astro-Turf and peppered with artificial trees. When the talking vulva appears after the opening credits, you know you're in for a feminist twist on an already twisted version of the children's tale. Through Feb. 19. (Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.)

Keith Edmier / Richard Phillips—A remarkable, rose-colored valentine to the artist's mother, rendered life-size in resin at nine months pregnant (that's Edmier visible in utero as she lifts her blouse). Both her impeccable Chanel suit and a second sculpture of a dozen red roses are direct references to Jackie Kennedy circa J.F.K.'s assassination, a juxtaposition that exposes the peculiar relationship between personal nostalgia and collective memory. / Grisaille charcoal and chalk drawings. Phillip's glam women are always salacious, even in a head-shot format. The four on view here offset the sentimentality in Edmier's work. Both shows through Feb. 12. (Petzel, 26 Wooster St. 334-9466.)

Donald Lipski—Sculptures from the early eighties, made by recombining found objects: a football in a cage or rubber soles filled with ball bearings. The ochre hue of the materials—old leather, rusted metal, wax—lends a faded air to the proceedings, suggesting a stack of yellowed newspapers. What may once have seemed whimsical now just looks tired. Through Feb. 26. (Gibson, 568 Broadway. 925-1192.)

Leonard McComb—Constructed of careful hatching and layers of delicate watercolor, the portraits of this British artist share a tender, willful naïveté. Whether clothed or nude, the subjects sit stiffly in comfortable chairs, often with a vase of flowers for company. They seem uniformly patient, sympathetic, and gentle—one has the distinct impression that McComb could have made Spiro Agnew look like a country parson. In terms of visual drama, the work is often pretty weak tea, but it is genuinely warming. Through Feb. 26. (Studio School, 8 W. 8th St. 673-6466.)

Raymond Pettibon—Unframed drawings, rendered in the artist's signature comic-book style and accompanied by text, generally cribbed from literary sources ranging from pulp fiction to Proust. The thematic cohesion of the front gallery, which is devoted exclusively to baseball players, is an odd introduction to the eclectic installation that follows, where vipers, lovers, and surfers (to name just a few) hang cheek by jowl. Pettibon's drawings are to contemporary art what the low-budget indie is to Hollywood: once deemed subversive, now all the rage. Through Feb. 12. (Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074.)

"Architecture and Memory"—Through sheer coincidence, this engaging three-person show shares a title, an artist (Julie Mehretu), and a theme (architectonic painting) with a concurrent exhibition uptown. The focus on architecture as a mnemonic device finds its most explicit corollary in Guillermo Kuitca's suggestively sketchy paintings of concert-hall seating plans. "Carnegie Hall," with its black surface and ghostly image, recalls Renaissance drawings of so-called "memory palaces" and resembles a map of the mind. Through Feb. 12. (CRG, 93 Grand St. 966-4360.)

Short List—**LEROY PERSON,** Ross, 568 Broadway. 343-2161. Through Feb. 19. . . . **JENNY SCOBEL,** Locus, 594 Broadway. 334-6424. Through Feb. 12. . . . **IONEL TALPAZAN** and **EDWARD NAGRODZKI,** American Primitive, 594 Broadway. 966-1530. Both shows through Feb. 12.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Swann—Old Master drawings. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710. Feb. 3.)

National Black Fine Art Show—Forty dealers gather for the fourth installment of this show, which features work by black artists from around the world. (Puck Building, Houston and Lafayette Sts. Feb. 4-6. For information, call 777-5218.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Frantisek Vobecky (1902-91)—Surrealist-influenced photomontages from the thirties, by this Czech avant-gardist. Through Feb. 26. (Ubu, 16 E. 78th St. 794-4444.)

"Picturing Guatemala"—More than a century's worth of images from the archives of CIRMA (Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica), including cartes de visite, funerary portraits, plantation promotions, and photographs of an execution during the Estrada Cabrera regime. Through April 16. (Americas Society, Park Ave. at 68th St. 249-8950.)

"Artist/Object"—Still-lifes from nature by Gwen Akin and Allan Ludwig, Amanda Means, Michael Martone, and Janet Russek. Through Feb. 19. (Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819.)

"Witness"—Images of lynchings in America, from the collections of James Allen and John Littlefield. Through Feb. 12. (Roth Horowitz, 160A E. 70th St. 717-9067. Open noon to 4.)

International Center of Photography—"Propaganda and Dreams: Photographing the 1930s in the USSR and the US." Through Feb. 13. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

Short List—**GIACOMO COSTA** and **WALKER EVANS,** Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 397-3930. Both shows through Feb. 26. . . . **ROBERT CUMMING,** Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166. Through Feb. 5. . . . **ANNIE LEIBOVITZ,** Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070. Through March 4. . . . **DEBORAH MESA-PELLY,** Lombard-Freid, 531 W. 26th St. 967-8040. Through Feb. 12.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for Alice Tully Hall is 875-5050; for Avery Fisher Hall, 875-5030; for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall, 247-7800; for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 501-3330; and for Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St., 854-7799.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**LA TRAVIATA,** with Cristina Gallardo-Domas, Roberto Aronica, and Thomas Hampson; conducted by Roberto Abbado. (Feb. 2 at 8 and Feb. 5 at 1.) . . . **DIE WALKÜRE,** with Deborah Polaski, Deborah Voigt, Hanna Schwarz, Poul Elming, and James Morris; James Levine. (Feb. 3 and Feb. 7 at 6:30.) . . . **LES CONTES D'HOFFMANN,** with Ruth Ann Swenson (portraying all four of the soprano heroines), Susanne Mentzer, Neil Shicoff, and Bryn Terfel; Mr. Levine. (Feb. 4 and Feb. 8 at 8.) . . . **DER ROSENKAVALIER,** with Renée Fleming, Susan Graham, Heidi Grant Murphy, Stuart Neill, Hans-Joachim Ketelsen, and Franz Hawlata; Mr. Levine. (Feb. 5 at 7:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

Juilliard Opera Center—Presenting Britten's "The Rape of Lucretia," fully staged, with Randall Behr conducting the Juilliard Opera Orchestra and Chorus and a cast headed by soprano Makiko Narumi (in the title role). (Studio 305, Juilliard School, Lincoln Center Plaza. Feb. 2, Feb. 4, and Feb. 6 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—Riccardo Muti, widely rumored to be in contention to succeed Kurt Masur as the orchestra's music director, conducts three rarely performed works: the so-called Overture to "Il Viaggio a Reims" (a piece whose shady pedigree suggests that it is a twentieth-century concoction unconnected to Rossini's opera), Stravinsky's Divertimento (arranged by the composer from his ballet "Le Baiser de la Fée"), and Strauss's early symphonic fantasy "Aus Italien," which the Philharmonic has not presented since the 1911-12 season. (Avery Fisher Hall. Feb. 3, Feb. 5, and Feb. 8 at 8 and Feb. 4 at 2. . . . **NOTE:** David Alan Miller leads a Young People's Concert at Avery Fisher Hall on Feb. 5 at 2.)

Choir of St. Ignatius Loyola—Kent Tritle directs Baroque motets (by Gabrieli, Schütz, and Bach), in addition to modern works by Górecki, Tavener, and John Kennedy (the première of his "Someday"). (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. 288-2520. Feb. 2 at 8.)

Akafist—The Russian men's choir performs liturgical chants and traditional works. (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. Feb. 3 at 1. Admission by contribution.)

American Symphony Orchestra—Leon Botstein conducts works by the Romanian composer George Enescu: his Suite No. 3 (the "Suite Villageoise"), Symphonie Concertante for Cello and Orchestra (featuring Bion Tsang), "Concert Overture on Popular Romanian Themes," and Symphony No. 1. (Avery Fisher Hall. Feb. 4 at 8.)

Pomerium performs music from the court of Charles V, at Corpus Christi Church.

TONY MILLIONAIRE

St. Olaf Choir—The Minnesotans present a wide-ranging program, directed by Anton Armstrong. (Carnegie Hall. Feb. 4 at 8.)

Manhattan School of Music Symphony—Glen Barton Cortese leads the première of his own "Toward the Unknown Region" (featuring soprano Lauren Flanigan), in addition to Joseph Schwantner's "New Morning for the World" (narrated by William Warfield) and Copland's Third Symphony. (Riverside Church, Riverside Dr. at 120th St. 870-6784. Feb. 4 at 8 and Feb. 6 at 3.)

Philharmonic Virtuosi—Richard Kapp leads Paul Turok's Overture to "Reeling in the Y2K" (a première), Shostakovich's Cello Concerto No. 1 (with Yosif Feigelson), Haydn's Symphony No. 7 ("Le Midi"), and Sibelius's incidental music to "Kuolema." (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Feb. 5 at 7.)

New York Youth Symphony—Mischa Santora conducts the première of John Mackey's Percussion Concerto (featuring Samuel Z. Solomon), in addition to Barber's "Adagio for Strings" and Dvořák's Symphony No. 9 ("From the New World"). (Carnegie Hall. Feb. 6 at 2.)

International Sejong Soloists—The chamber orchestra performs works by Vivaldi, Shostakovich, and others. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. Feb. 6 at 2. For information about tickets, call 586-4680.)

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra—Daniele Gatti conducts Brahms's "Variations on a Theme by Haydn," Mozart's A-Major Piano Concerto (K. 488, with Ignat Solzhenitsyn), and Beethoven's Symphony No. 5. (Avery Fisher Hall. Feb. 6 at 3.)

Pomerium—Charles V, Duke of Burgundy, King of Spain, and Holy Roman Emperor, found time in his busy schedule (and funds in his royal purse) to become one of the leading musical patrons of the Renaissance. In this concert, Alexander Blachly leads the vocal chamber ensemble in works composed to mark specific events in the monarch's life, including Nicolas Gombert's "Sur Tous Regretz" Mass (which was created for Charles's coronation, in 1530) and his motet "Qui colis Ausoniam" (which celebrates the signing of a 1533 treaty among Charles, the Pope, and several Italian rulers) and Orlando di Lasso's motet "Heroum Soboles" (which marks Charles's relinquishment of his kingdoms, in 1556). The program also includes pieces by Thomas Crecquillon and Cristóbal de Morales. Presented by Music Before 1800. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 666-9266. Feb. 6 at 4.)

Bach Choir of Bethlehem—An outgrowth of the fervent musical culture of the Pennsylvania Moravians, this ensemble was founded in 1898 and gave the first American performance of Bach's B-Minor Mass, on March 27, 1900, in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. To mark the centennial of that event, Greg Funfgeld directs the choir and the Bach Festival Orchestra in the same work. In a welcome change from what has become standard operating procedure—assigning the arias, with their widely varying demands, to a quartet of soloists—the solo movements are here distributed among sopranos Tamara Matthews and Rosa Lamoreaux, mezzo-soprano Marietta Simpson, tenor Benjamin Butterfield (a Canadian currently on the rise in Bach circles), baritone William Sharp, and bass-baritone Daniel Lichti. (Carnegie Hall. Feb. 7 at 8.)

Gotham Baroque Orchestra—The period-instrument ensemble presents concertos by Corelli and Handel, as well as a suite from Purcell's music for "The Fairy Queen." (Casa Italiana, Columbia University, Amsterdam Ave. at 117th St. Feb. 8 at 6. No tickets necessary.)

Philadelphia Orchestra—Wolfgang Sawallisch conducts Bartók's Piano Concerto No. 3 (with Yefim Bronfman) and Górecki's Symphony No. 3 (with soprano Elzbieta Szmytka); the latter is the hypnotic piece that broke through the ceiling of the classical charts in 1992 and went on to become one of the all-time top-selling classical recordings. (Carnegie Hall. Feb. 8 at 8.)

Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir and Tallinn Chamber Orchestra—Tõnu Kaljuste leads Bach's Cantata No. 4 ("Christ lag in Todesbanden") and excerpts from Arvo Pärt's "Kanon Pokajanen," among other works. (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. Feb. 8 at 8. For information about tickets, call 721-6500.)

Choir of the Church of St. Luke in the Fields—David Shuler directs the choir, soloists, and a period-instrument ensemble in a reconstruction of a mid-seventeenth-century Venetian Vespers service, with music by Monteverdi and others. (St. Luke In-the-Fields, 487 Hudson St., at Grove St. Feb. 8 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

Juilliard Symphony—Roberto Minczuk leads Schubert's "Unfinished" Symphony, Mozart's Bassoon Concerto (with I-Hsiu Chen as soloist), and Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra. (Alice Tully Hall. Feb. 8 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

RECITALS

Rolf Schulte—The violinist is joined by pianist James Winn to perform all the music Stravinsky wrote for their combination of instruments, including such classics as the "Suite Italienne" and the "Duo Concertant." (Merkin Concert Hall. Feb 2 at 8.)

Chockablock Bach—The distinguished pianist András Schiff offers two of three generous Bach programs he performs this month at Lincoln Center. Feb. 2 at 8: The six "English" Suites.... ¶ Feb. 5 at 8: The six "French" Suites plus the so-called "French Overture" in B Minor. (Alice Tully Hall.... NOTE: On Feb. 5, from 10 A.M. to 5, at the Kaplan Penthouse, Lincoln Center and the American Bach Society host a symposium on Bach and his world, open to holders of tickets for any of Lincoln Center's Bach Festival; seating is on a first-come, first-served basis.)

Bargemusic—Feb. 3 at 7:30 and Feb. 6 at 2: Violinist Carmit Zori and pianist Gilbert Kalish perform Mozart's Sonata in B-Flat Major (K. 378), and cellist Ronald Thomas joins them for piano trios by Schumann (in F Major) and Smetana.... ¶ Feb. 4-5 at 7:30: Baritone William Sharp and Mr. Kalish offer Schumann's "Dichterliebe" and (with Ms. Zori assisting) a set of obbligato songs by Spohr; also on the program are works by Bach (played by guitarist David Leisner) and Paganini (his D-Major "Terzetto Concertante" for Viola, Guitar, and Cello). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061.)

Barbara Bonney—The soprano, assisted by pianist Warren Jones, offers a program of Scandinavian art songs, by Wilhelm Stenhammar, Sibelius, and Grieg. (Alice Tully Hall. Feb. 3 at 8.)

Continuum—The modern-music group offers recent works by Franghiz Ali-Zadeh, whose works typically reflect the colorful timbres and non-Western musical techniques of her native Azerbaijan. (Miller Theatre. Feb. 3 at 8.)

Alaria Chamber Ensemble—Presenting Beethoven's "Kakadu" Variations and Tchaikovsky's Piano Trio, in addition to Alexander Tcherepnin's F-Minor Sonata for Violin and Piano. (Weill Recital Hall. Feb. 3 at 8.)

Annea Lockwood and Chris Mann—The composer and the self-described "compositional linguistics creator" perform their own works, with several colleagues assisting. (Merkin Concert Hall. Feb. 3 at 8.)

Shostakovich
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Program 1
String Quartet No.1 in C
String Quartet No.2 in A
String Quartet No. 3 in F
Pre-concert lecture by Harlow Robinson at 1:00 Kaplan Penthouse
Sunday, February 6
at 2:00 Alice Tully Hall
Tickets: $38

Program 2
String Quartet No.4 in D
String Quartet No.6 in G
String Quartet No.5 in B-flat
Pre-concert lecture by Harlow Robinson at 1:00 Kaplan Penthouse
Sunday, February 13
at 2:00 Alice Tully Hall
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Program 3
String Quartet No.7 in F sharp minor
String Quartet No.9 in E-flat
String Quartet No.8 in C minor
Wednesday, February 16
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Program 4
String Quartet No.10 in A-flat
String Quartet No.11 in F minor
String Quartet No.12 in D-flat
Wednesday, February 23
at 8:00 Alice Tully Hall
Tickets: $38

Program 5
String Quartet No.13 in B-flat minor
String Quartet No.14 in F sharp
String Quartet No.15 in E-flat minor
Sunday, February 27
at 2:00 Alice Tully Hall
Tickets: $38

Shostakovich Symposium
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Performance demonstration by the Emerson String Quartet
Is this the music of a contrite Soviet citizen or a tormented rebel? The Shostakovich controversy has only intensified in recent years, providing the basis for a highly charged discussion of the man and his music. Panelists include Tim Jackson, Peter Laki, Robert P. Morgan, Alex Ross, and Michael Scammell.
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Sequitur—The modern-music group presents a cabaret program that mixes classics of the genre with new works by such contemporary composers as David Del Tredici, Tania León, and David Lang. (Joe's Pub, at the Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. Feb. 3-5 at 8:30. For information about tickets, call 260-2400.)

Artemis String Quartet—In its New York début recital, the German ensemble plays quartets by Beethoven (in F Major, Op. 135), Ligeti (his Second), and Mozart (in D Minor, K. 421). (Weill Recital Hall. Feb. 4 at 8.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—Feb. 4 at 8: For the past month, the Society has been exploring music composed between the end of the First World War and the end of the Second. The final concert of the series—featuring soprano Mary Nessinger, tenor Jerry Hadley, pianist Jeffrey Swann, and the Orion String Quartet—focusses on works by American composers: Copland's "Vitebsk" (for piano trio), Barber's String Quartet, George Antheil's Violin Sonata No. 2, and songs by Ruth Crawford Seeger, Henry Cowell, and others. . . . ¶ Feb. 6 at 5: Performers associated with the organization's "Chamber Music Society Two" incentive perform Telemann's D-Major Concerto for Four Violins, James Primosch's Piano Quintet, and Tchaikovsky's "Souvenir de Florence" (for string sextet). (Alice Tully Hall.)

Debussy String Quartet—The French foursome plays quartets by Milhaud (the first of his eighteen) and Debussy and is joined by Jean-Efflam Bavouzet for Franck's Piano Quintet. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Feb. 5 at 8.)

Shalev Ad-El—The Israeli harpsichordist performs Bach's "Goldberg" Variations. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. Feb. 6 at noon.)

Emerson String Quartet—The foursome launches a monthlong survey of Shostakovich's fifteen quartets by playing the first three. (Alice Tully Hall. Feb. 6 at 2.)

Steven Lubin—The pianist performs Bach's "Italian" Concerto and sonatas by Beethoven (in F Major, Op. 54) and Schubert (in B-Flat Major, D. 960). (Wave Hill, 249th St. at Independence Ave., the Bronx. 718-549-3200, ext. 229. Feb. 6 at 2.)

New York Philharmonic Ensembles—Members of the orchestra play Copland's "Two Pieces for String Quartet" and "Movement for String Quartet," Fauré's Piano Trio in D Minor, Kodály's Duo for Violin and Cello, and Martinů's Serenade for Two Clarinets and String Trio. (Merkin Concert Hall. Feb. 6 at 3.)

Tributes to Kurt Weill—Observations of the composer's centennial are beginning in earnest. The soprano **teresa stratas** speaks about her approach to performing Weill's music and her friendship with his widow, Lotte Lenya, in an afternoon that also includes performances by recent winners of the Lotte Lenya Singing Competition. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Feb. 6 at 3.) . . . ¶ Soprano **joy bogen**, assisted by the English baritone **steven kimbrough** and several instrumentalists, offers a revue that explores the romantic involvement of Weill and Lenya and includes several unpublished Weill compositions. (Weill Recital Hall. Feb. 6 at 8:30. . . . ¶ Merkin Concert Hall. Feb. 7 at 8.)

Frederica von Stade and **Matthew Polenzani**—The mezzo-soprano and the tenor, assisted by pianist Craig Rutenberg, perform songs by Liszt, Britten, Jake Heggie, and others. (Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St. 685-0008, ext. 347. Feb. 6 at 4.)

Speculum Musicae—Edgard Varèse (1883-1965) traversed a huge aesthetic distance in the course of his life, transcending his classical training in Paris (from D'Indy, Roussel, and Widor) to become one of the most revolutionary composers of the twentieth century. Varèse's breakthrough was formulating the concept of "organized sound," in which the acoustic properties of sounds determine the overriding structural and thematic aspects of a composition (displacing the traditional push-and-pull of harmonic consonance and dissonance). Though his music can be an acquired taste, his admirers have included such diverse figures as Debussy, Stokowski, Frank Zappa, and the scientists who relaxed to his "Ionisation" while developing the atom bomb at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, in 1940. Varèse destroyed (or conveniently lost) most of his early work and as a result left behind a catalogue of only fifteen pieces. Speculum Musicae here presents five: "Hyperprism," "La Procession de Vergès" (a little-known work composed for a film about Joan Miró), "Intégrales," "Density 21.5," and "Déserts." (Miller Theatre. Feb. 6 at 5.)

Music at the Anthology—This ambitious modern-music series takes on a new look this season by telescoping its entire series into a weeklong festival, which will include twelve premières. Feb. 6 at 7: The Eberli Ensemble and performance artist John Kelly present new and recent works that bear some connection to late-nineteenth-century musical or literary sources, by Marita Bolles, George Crumb, Richard Einhorn, Joel Friedman, Pea Hicks, and Robert Maggio. . . . ¶ Feb. 8 at 8: The Western Wind vocal sextet and Brooklyn Youth Chorus are featured in works by North and South American composers James Bassi, Leonard Bernstein, Lisa Bielawa, Patrick Clark, Shafer Mahoney, Gustavo Matamoros, and Francisco Nuñez, including several pieces that involve musicians performing in duets with themselves on tape. (Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. 969-0250. The festival continues through Feb. 12.)

Jeffrey Kahner—The principal flutist of the Philadelphia Orchestra plays works by Norman Dello Joio, Otto Luening, Ervín Schulhoff, Paul Taffanel, and Hindemith, with pianist Charles Abramovic assisting. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. Feb. 7 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Geoffrey Burleson—Performing twentieth-century piano works, including sonatas by Leon Kirchner, George Walker (his Second), and Boulez (his Third). Presented by the League of Composers/I.S.C.M. (Merkin Concert Hall. Feb. 7 at 8.)

Nina Kuzma-Sapiejewska—The Polish-born pianist performs numerous works of her most famous musical compatriot, Frédéric Chopin (including his First and Fourth Ballades and his Second and Third Scherzos), as well as works by Debussy. (Weill Recital Hall. Feb. 7 at 8.)

Rebel—The period-instrument players present works by Salomone Rossi and other seventeenth-century Italian composers. (Angel Orensanz Foundation Center for the Arts, 172 Norfolk St., at E. Houston St. Feb. 7 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

Festival Chamber Music Society—Members of the ensemble offer string quartets by Dvořák (in F Major, the "American") and Haydn (in C Major, Op. 76, No. 3, with its famous variations on what would become the Austrian, and later German, national anthem), as well as Jean Françaix's Quartet for English Horn and Strings. (Merkin Concert Hall. Feb. 8 at 8.)

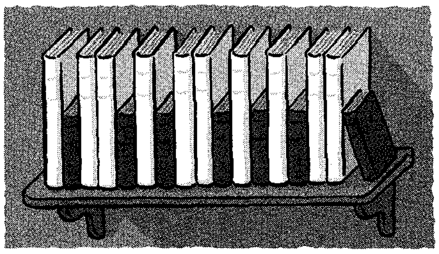
ABOVE AND BEYOND

Readings—Feb. 4 at 8: By Peter Landesman, from his novel "Blood Acre," Barry Yourgrau, from his imaginary memoir "Haunted Traveler," and Binnie Kirshenbaum, from her novel, "Pure Poetry." (National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Feb. 7 at 8: By novelists Edwidge Danticat and Allan Gurganus, from their work. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)

Talks—Feb. 2 at 6:30: *New Yorker* writer Oliver Sacks discusses light and perception. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Feb. 3 at 5: Artist Cecily Brown considers the human figure. (New York Academy of Art, 111 Franklin St. 966-0300.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Instrument Readings



ANYONE who has ever strummed a guitar or slid across a piano bench knows that musical instruments are more than tools for making noise; they can also be sites of social history. **Piano Roles: Three Hundred Years of Life with the Piano** (Yale), with essays by James Parakilas and others, gives a lavishly illustrated history of the piano in which technical analysis of dampers, double escapements, and the like is buttressed by accounts of notable pianists from Clementi to Liberace. Social history also features prominently, especially in the cases of the innumerable young nineteenth-century women for whom reliable but self-effacing piano technique became a required social skill.

Piano manufacturers built concert halls and even signed exclusive deals with famous pianists, but the relationship between art and commerce intensified with the advent of the electric guitar. Steve Waksman, in **Instruments of Desire: The Electric Guitar and the Shaping of Musical Experience** (Harvard), shows that guitarists sometimes worked with manufacturers on authorized designs, such as Gibson's Les Paul guitar and Gretsch's Chet Atkins model (whose hokey appearance appalled Atkins). Design advances parallelled sonic innovation. Les Paul may have aimed for an idealized version of the acoustic sound, but by the time of Jimi Hendrix the expressive range of amplified sound was far greater.

Though the guitar and piano evolved gradually, the saxophone was the invention of a single man—the nineteenth century flute- and clarinet-maker Adolphe Sax. **The Cambridge Companion to the Saxophone**, edited by Richard Ingham, quotes Rossini as saying, "This is the most beautiful kind of sound that I have ever heard." Whether Rossini would have liked what the sax has become is another matter. Despite a significant classical repertoire, the saxophone is now inseparable from jazz. Perhaps the best description of what the sax can do comes from a poem entitled "An Address to Adolphe Sax in Heaven," which likens its sound to "time salivating on a reed."

—Leo Carey

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

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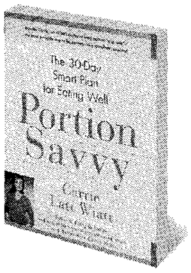
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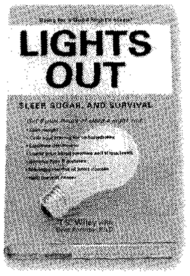
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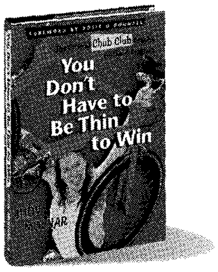
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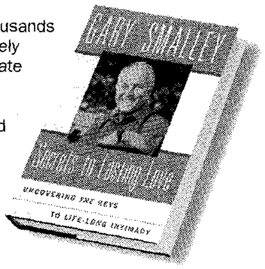
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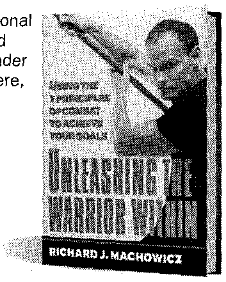
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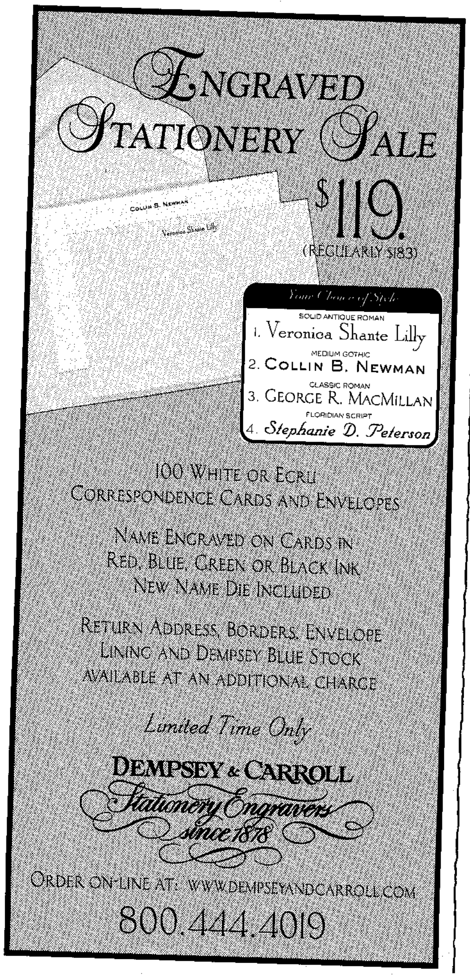

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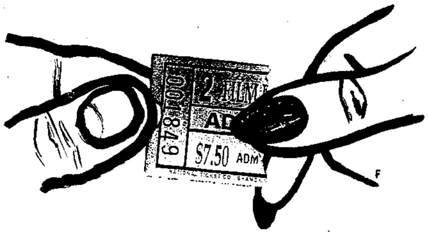


THE MOVIES

OPENING

GENDERNAUTS—A documentary by Monika Treut about the transgendered community in San Francisco. Opening Feb. 4. (Cinema Village.)

GUNSHY—Liam Neeson plays a D.E.A. agent on the verge of a nervous breakdown in this action comedy. With Oliver Platt and Sandra Bullock. Eric Blakeney directed. Opening Feb. 4.

OUTLAW!—Enzo Monteleone wrote and directed this drama about a gentleman bandit who uses a toy gun to rob banks. Based on a true story. In Italian. Opening Feb. 4. (Film Forum.)

SCREAM 3—The final installment of the horror trilogy, directed by Wes Craven. With Neve Campbell, Courtney Cox Arquette, and Parker Posey. Opening Feb. 4.

SIMPATICO—Nick Nolte and Jeff Bridges play old pals in the horseracing business who share a secret, in this drama directed by Matthew Warchus. With Sharon Stone and Catherine Keener. Opening Feb. 4.

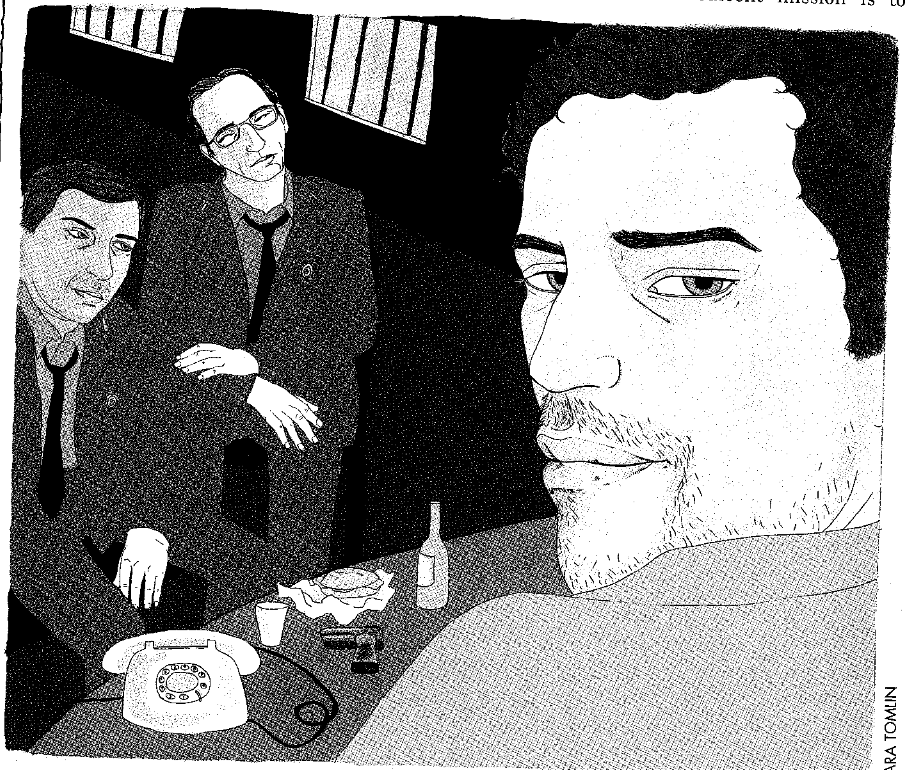
FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

ANY GIVEN SUNDAY—In Oliver Stone's pro-football movie, everything happens at once: the ball is snapped, thighs churn, bodies lock together, and, as the coach screams, an arm is raised to throw the ball. Stone takes us so deep inside the action that we feel we're being threshed by the teeth of a machine. The movie is ostensibly a protest against corporate control of sport but is itself a prime example of corporate art. With Al Pacino, haggard and magnificent, as the aging, traditionalist coach Tony D'Amato; Dennis Quaid as the star quarterback who, in his late thirties, is fading fast; Jamie Foxx as the young hot shot who wants to replace him, and who must be taught to play not just for himself but for the team; Cameron Diaz as the blond-bitch team owner; and football great Lawrence Taylor as a defensive genius who risks maiming himself.—*David Denby* (1/10/00) (84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE CUP—If Buddha had made a movie, what would it be like? This film, directed by Khyentse Norbu, a Tibetan incarnate lama, is a spare, simply produced picture that tells the story of a group of young monks who ask their abbot for permission to rent a television set so they can watch the final match of the 1998 World Cup. (The monks root for France, "the only country that has always supported Tibet.") Norbu shot the film at Chokling monastery in India, and all of the "characters" are actual monks, who mostly play themselves. The Tibet typically shown to us by Hollywood is so freighted with consequence that it's refreshing to see a monastery depicted as a kind of New Age prep school, complete with a jocular give-and-take among the masters and pupils and surreptitious peeks at girlie magazines. A thirteen-year-old novice, Jamyang Lordo, shines as a cheeky troublemaker who worships the Brazilian superstar Ronaldo. ("He has a shaved head, but he is not a monk.") All is not lightness, though. The Chinese occupation of Tibet is frequently hinted at, and the young monks' love of soccer, while mirthful and humanizing, shows the difficulty of preserving Tibetan culture in exile. Norbu does much here with very little; his film is a testament to the power of understatement. In Tibetan and Hindi.—*Michael Agger* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

GALAXY QUEST—Tim Allen plays a William Shatneresque TV space captain of a cancelled series whose current mission is to



LARA TOMLIN

Opening Feb. 4 at Film Forum, Enzo Monteleone's "Outlaw!"

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lead his fellow cast members where they have boldly gone many times before—to "Galaxy Quest" conventions. At one of these events, some actual space travellers mingle with the fans. Soon, Allen and the other actors have embarked on a mission way beyond their old scriptwriters' imaginings. Writers David Howard and Robert Gordon and director Dean Parisot exploit the comic dichotomy between actor and action hero for all it's worth, adding a surprisingly effective seasoning of special effects and emotion. Allen succeeds with equal measures of heart and bluster; Alan Rickman is a classically trained actor sick to death of his Spock-like persona; Sigourney Weaver, the only crew member the on-board computer can understand, scores warmly as a blonde. Much like "Trekkies," the delightful documentary that opened and closed at warp speed last year, this deft comedy both pokes fun at the "Star Trek" phenomenon and embraces it.—*Ken Marks* (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

Girl, Interrupted—It's 1967 and a depressed and "promiscuous" upper-middle-class Boston girl seems to have just two choices: the Seven Sisters or the psychiatric ward. Susanna Kaysen's memoir of the time she spent "resting" in the élite McLean Psychiatric Hospital (Sylvia Plath was an alumna) has been adapted by James Mangold, with Winona Ryder, using her doe eyes and rheumy voice to good effect, as Kaysen. However, Angelina Jolie, the ward's truth-telling sociopath, provides the main spark and delivers the film's sharpest lines. Sanity arrives in the form of rock and roll, the talking cure, and Whoopi Goldberg, who plays a worldly-wise nurse. With his mental-ward setting, Mangold wants to provide a fresh perspective on the sixties, but he ends up merely institutionalizing them.—*M.A.* (Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, and Union Square.)

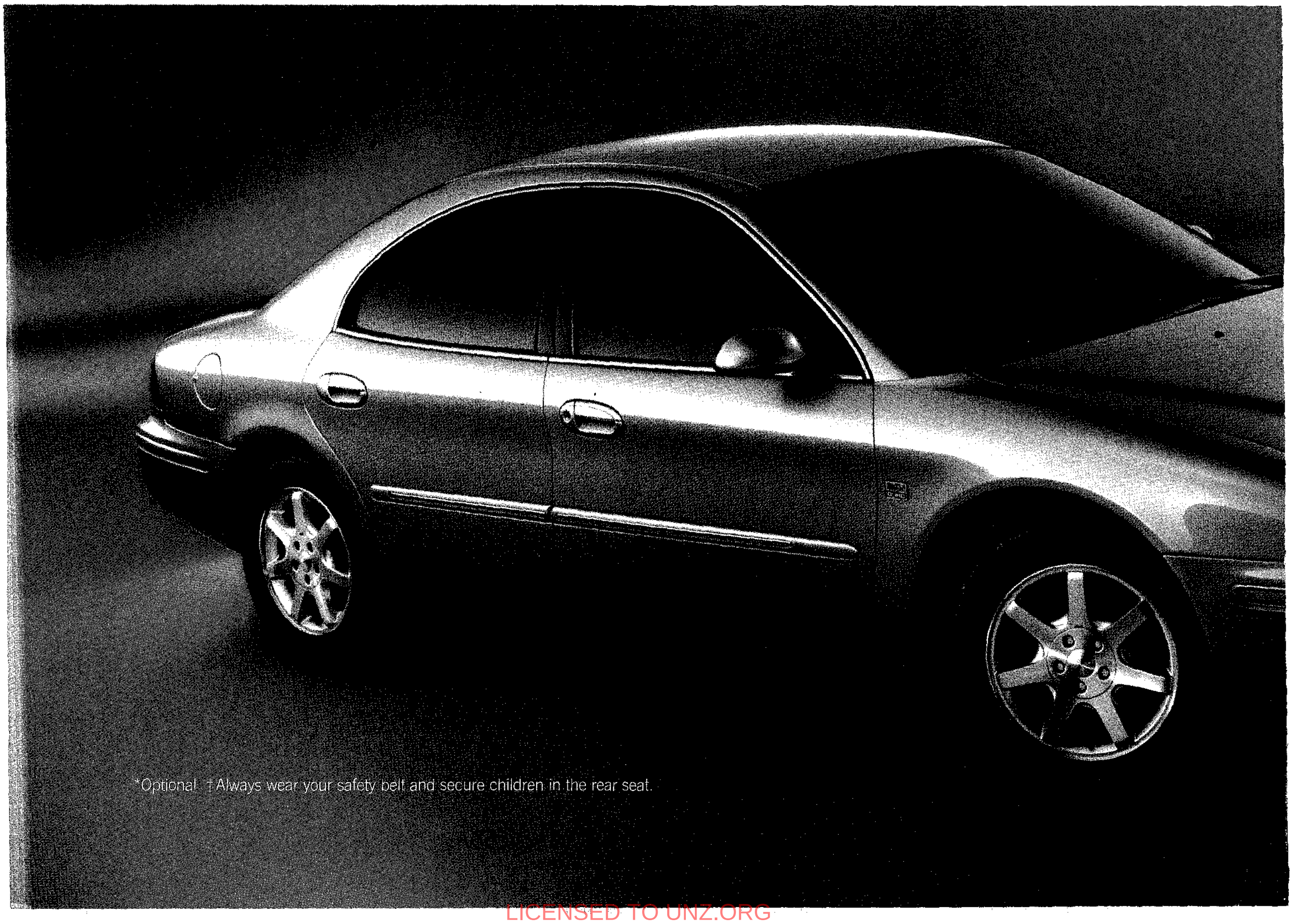
Holy Smoke—A mad new movie from Jane Campion, who has forsaken the incisiveness of "An Angel at My Table" and "The Piano" for something close to an acid trip. Kate Winslet plays Ruth, a young Australian woman who travels to India and falls victim to—or, from her point of view, finds peace and poise with—a religious cult. Her family lures her back to Sydney and hires an "exit counselor" to clear out her mind. Given that this counselor is supposed to be the voice of sanity in the movie, it is unfortunate that Campion assigned the role to Harvey Keitel. Winslet, by comparison, seems wholly in control—by turns lucid and lubricious, and always alive to the comedy of the situation. Thank heaven somebody is, because, long before the end, the film drifts into the outback and starts wandering around in circles. The forced weirdness of the imagery and the slightly weary satire of bourgeois existence do not make for an appetizing mix. In fact, the whole thing could use a little exit counselling.—*Anthony Lane* (1/17/00) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

The Hurricane—A very square inspirational movie, factually untrustworthy, about the black boxer Rubin (Hurricane) Carter, a contender for the middleweight crown, who was locked up in 1967 for murders that he did not commit, and who spent years in prison refashioning himself as a lean, ascetic thinker and militant—the icon of the African-American male unjustly incarcerated. As Carter, Denzel Washington offers his usual concentration, quickness, and stern, appraising gaze; he's great, but the movie is a crock, a liberal fairy tale about a black American teen-ager (Vicellous Reon Shannon) and three white Canadian do-gooders (Liev Schreiber, John Hannah, and Deborah Kara Unger) who perform the investigative work that leads to Carter's release. The movie slights the work of lawyers who worked for Carter without fees for years, and neglects to tell us that Carter had been imprisoned once for three muggings before his arrest for the murders. Directed, clunkily, by Norman Jewison; written by Armyan Bernstein and Dan Gordon.—*D.D.* (1/10/00) (Beekman, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

Isn't She Great—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Union Square.)

Magnolia—In Paul Thomas Anderson's new movie, the characters break down, fall apart, and denounce themselves and others. "Magnolia" consists of multiple vignettes set in the San Fernando Valley, but since there's no common theme, the picture becomes a kind of mad crackup derby. Much of the material is earnest Arthur Miller-type stuff about how we can't escape the past, we can't escape the evil we've done, we all need to be truthful with one another, and so on. The ideas are banal, but Anderson ("Boogie Nights") plays each sequence in real time and cuts among them with remarkable fluency, and the actors have some tremendous arialike moments—especially Julianne Moore as an adulterous young wife, John C. Reilly as an angelic cop looking for love, and Tom Cruise as some sort of sex guru who hosts a cable-TV show called "Seduce and Destroy." With Jason Robards, Philip Seymour Hoffman, and William H. Macy.—*D.D.* (12/20/99) (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema I, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

Man on the Moon—Jim Carrey, as the surrealist comic Andy Kaufman, who died in 1984, captures Kaufman's infantile gran-



*Optional †Always wear your safety belt and secure children in the rear seat.

diosity, the taunting ironic schmuckiness that dared anyone to take offense. Unfortunately, the moviemakers' intention is not to illuminate Kaufman but to enshrine him as a pure performer and beautiful nut case. We are too intimidated to ask such obvious questions as, Is Kaufman calculating and shrewd or is he just unconscious—a semi-psychotic set loose in the media? Our desire to understand him is recast as some sort of existential weakness; the movie turns into an exercise in one-upmanship. With Paul Giamatti, Danny DeVito, and Courtney Love. Written by Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski.—*D.D.* (12/27/99-1/3/00) (Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

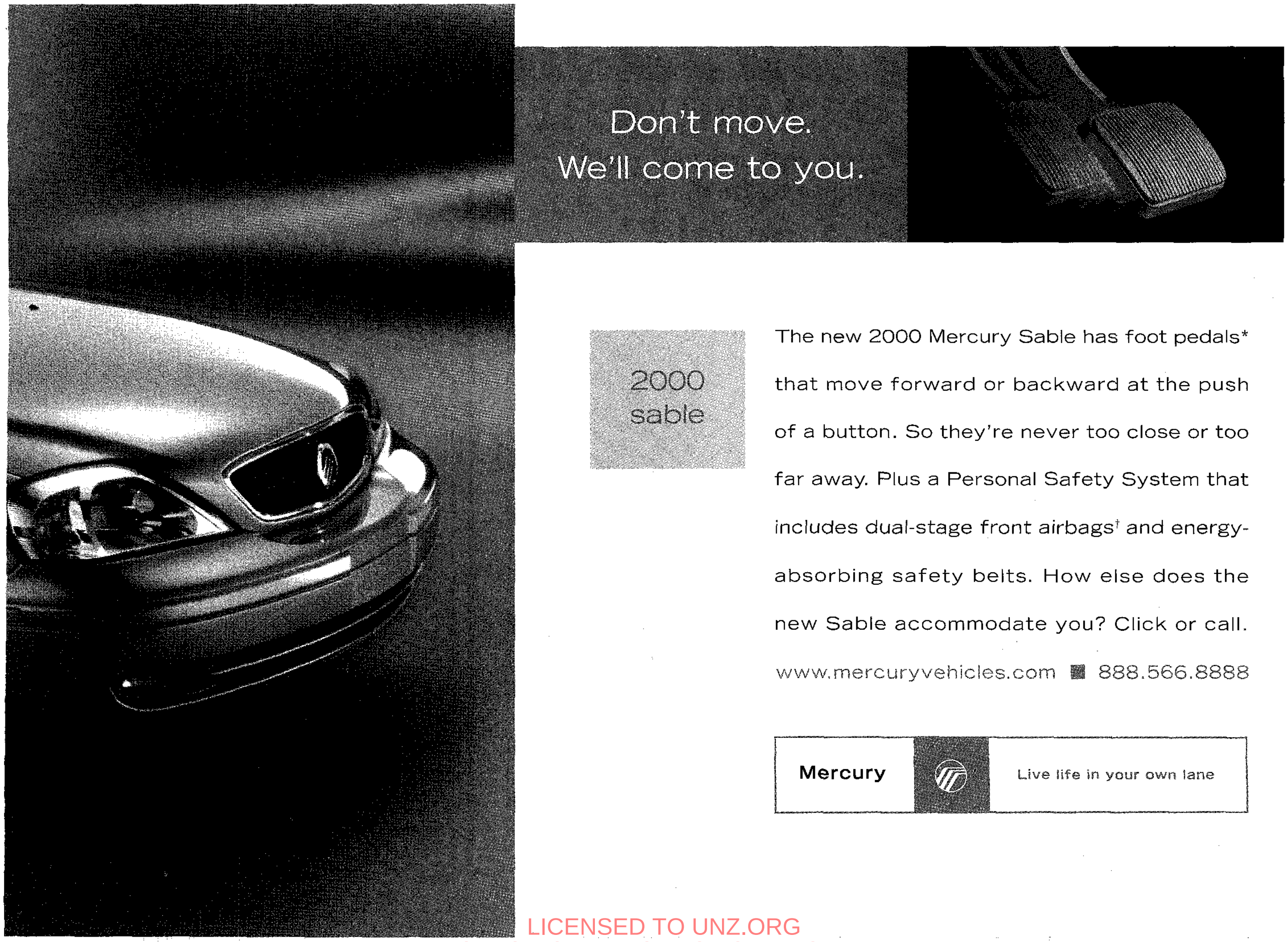
A Map of the World—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Angelika Film Center and Sutton 1 and 2.)

The Mollycoddle (1920)—Douglas Fairbanks and his director, Victor Fleming, gave form to the red-blooded American male in this robust comedy adventure. Fairbanks plays a Europhilic fop who becomes virile and commanding when he returns to his native Arizona, where he foils a perfidious diamond smuggler (Wallace Beery) and protects the virtue of a fetching Secret Service agent (Ruth Renick). The movie is about striking the right balance between the primitive and the civilized. And that's what the filmmaking does: Fleming never stints on the slapstick, but he also lays out the villain's black-market operation in a droll, minimalist cartoon, and, in another modern touch, places us inside Fairbanks' head as he collapses in a steamship's stokehole. The movie kicks into high gear when Fairbanks gallantly races through the vertiginous expanses of the Hopi reservation. In the cliff-banging finale, the smuggler purposely sets off an avalanche. Our hero tracks him down—and sends him crashing through adobe walls and over a waterfall.—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of Modern Art; Feb. 2.)

Next Friday—Ice Cube reprises his role as the Los Angeles homeboy Craig in this sequel to the 1995 comedy "Friday." It's four years later and Debo, the neighborhood thug, is getting out of jail, so Craig leaves South Central and goes to live with his Uncle Elroy (Don "DC" Curry) in Rancho Cucamonga, "The City Away from the City." Uncle Elroy lives large off of his lottery winnings, smoking blunts and taking Viagra, but his crib is on a wack cul-de-sac: the three Latino brothers across the way are running drugs. The action starts rolling when Craig and his cousin Day-Day (Mike Epps) must scheme to get a couple of grand to prevent foreclosure on Uncle Elroy's house. The film has a great soundtrack and some good laughs, but it lacks the backbeat of quotidian life and the sly evasion of stereotypes that made "Friday" a classic. And motormouth Chris Tucker, who lit up the original, is sorely missed. Ice Cube wrote the script, and he knows his demographic: a white skateboard punk plays a major role. Steve Carr, the noted hip-hop video director, makes his big-screen débût.—*M.A.* (Astor Plaza, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

Potemkin (1925)—Voted the greatest film of all time by an international panel of critics in 1958, "Potemkin" has achieved such an unholy eminence that few people any longer dispute its merits. Great as it undoubtedly is, it's not really a likable film; it's amazing, though—it keeps its freshness and its excitement, even if you resist its cartoon message. Perhaps no other movie has ever had such graphic strength in its images, and the young director Sergei Eisenstein opened up a new technique of psychological stimulation by means of rhythmic editing—"montage." The Odessa Steps sequence, the most celebrated single sequence in film history, has been imitated in one way or another in countless television news programs and movies with crowd scenes; it has also been parodied endlessly. And yet the power of the original is undiminished. Montage is used in this film for revolutionary political purposes: the subject is the 1905 mutiny of the sailors of the battleship Potemkin, and the massacre of the people who sympathized with them. But policies in the U.S.S.R. changed: mutiny could no longer be sanctioned, nor could experimental film techniques, and under Stalin, Eisenstein was purged, partially reinstated, and then fell from grace over and over. "Potemkin" looks astonishingly like a newsreel, and the politically naïve have often taken it as a documentary. The more knowing have a graceful euphemism: Eisenstein, they say, "sacrificed historical facts for dramatic effect." Silent, with added musical soundtrack.—*Pauline Kael* (Anthology Film Archives; Feb. 4.)

Rear Window (1954)—Set in a Greenwich Village apartment and its adjoining courtyards, Alfred Hitchcock's urban backyard-murder story is a light satire of modern city life and a thorough exploration of the allure (and risks) of voyeurism. It revolves around a photojournalist (James Stewart) who's laid up in a wheelchair with injuries he received while shooting the Indy 500. As a distraction from the pain, the summer heat, and his troubled romance with a gorgeous fashion plate (Grace Kelly), he takes to looking out the window and immersing himself in his neighbors' lives, using his long-lens camera as a telescope. Eventually, he, his lover, and his peppery nurse (Thelma Ritter) stumble upon what they think is a murder committed by a man across the way (Raymond Burr.) This is Hitchcock's most involving experiment in audience participation: we perceive the apartment windows as game squares, and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we're made to think that by taking in as many fractured scenes as possible we can solve a murder and win the game. (Of course, we, like the hero, learn that this isn't a game.) It's no accident that Hitchcock uses his trademark cameo to play a man who resets a clock; the entire movie tests the limits of empirical evidence.—*M.S.* (Film Forum; Feb. 2-8.)

Supernova—On a rescue mission in the twenty-second century, a deep-space medical vessel captained by Robert Forster makes a "dimension jump," accompanied by "2001" visuals and "A Day in the Life" sound effects. The guy the little crew rescues (Peter Facinelli) turns out to be bad, very bad, and his cargo, a youth-giving, ninth-dimension goo, has the power to destroy the universe before remaking it all over again. Who could have created such a thing? "Someone as smart as God, and a lot less nice," says medical officer Angela Bassett. Actually, "Thomas Lee" is how the director's name appears in the credits, but at least three men were involved (Walter Hill and Francis Ford Coppola among them). The main good guy is crew member James Spader, showing unexpected power in dark, buff mode. Like so many supposedly high-tech thrillers, the film ends with a low-tech punch-out, complete with a space-helmet head-butt.—*K.M.* (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, and Village East Cinemas.)

The Talented Mr. Ripley—For his first outing since "The English Patient," the writer and director Anthony Minghella has returned to the roasted light of Italy. The source is Patricia Highsmith's spooky, misanthropic novel of 1955; Matt Damon plays Tom Ripley, her murderous hero, although he lacks the quicksilver elusiveness that the role demands. He is outshone by Jude Law, whose violent disappearance, halfway through the picture, is a grievous wound. Law is sunny, slippery, and pansexual; he might have made a better Ripley himself. In the female roles, Gwyneth Paltrow struggles to find anything much in the stony Marge, whom Highsmith so loftily scorned; more rewarding is the dreamy Cate Blanchett as an heiress named Meredith Logue—a part invented by Minghella. Her fine features are like a flawless period detail in themselves. The film feels warm but unsettled, as if hinting at approaching storms; the score, too, flits from lugubrious to manic. With Philip Seymour Hoffman, perfectly cast once again, this time as another of Tom's victims.—*A.L.* (12/27/99-1/3/00) (East 85th Street, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Olympia I and II, Union Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

Topsy-Turvy—Mike Leigh's brilliant re-creation of the most famous partnership in the British theatre—the collaboration of W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan in the glory era of imperial rule. There are elements here of a traditional bio-pic—failure, triumph, intimations of immortality—but none of the stodginess and self-congratulation that usually plague the form. Sullivan (Allan Corduner), a libertine who nevertheless had serious pretensions as a composer, and Gilbert (Jim Broadbent), formal, irascible, and asexual, but a great theatrical pro, are so dissimilar in temperament that they can hardly bear each other's company. Leigh suggests that the combination of sentimental languor and incisiveness produced the art of "The Mikado," whose preparation and first performance take up the second half of the movie. The authentic period stage lighting produces a glow on the painted faces; the fragile beauty of Sullivan's tunes is piercing when they are played, as they are here, at slower tempos than we are used to hearing. In all, one of the greatest movies about the theatre. With Lesley Manville, Timothy Spall, Ron Cook, and Wendy Nottingham.—*D.D.* (12/27/99-1/3/00) (Paris and BAM Rose Cinemas.)

ALSO PLAYING

ALL ABOUT MY MOTHER (11/22/99): Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Eastside Playhouse, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **AMERICAN BEAUTY** (9/20/99): First & 62nd Cinemas and State. . . . **AMERICAN MOVIE:** Cinema Village. . . . **ANNA AND THE KING** (12/27/99-1/3/00): Ziegfeld. . . . **THE BIG TEASE:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **BOYS DON'T CRY** (10/18-25/99): Criterion Center, Quad Cinema, and 64th and 2nd. . . . **THE CIDER HOUSE RULES** (12/13/99): Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Gotham Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, and Lincoln Square. . . . **CRADLE WILL ROCK** (12/13/99): Angelika Film Center and Kips Bay Theatre. . . . **DOWN TO YOU:** Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatres, New York Twin, and Union Square. . . . **THE END OF THE AFFAIR** (12/6/99): BAM Rose Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **EYE OF THE BEHOLDER:** Chelsea West and Lincoln Square. . . . **THE GREEN MILE** (12/20/99): Coronet Cinemas, 42nd Street

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077).
Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

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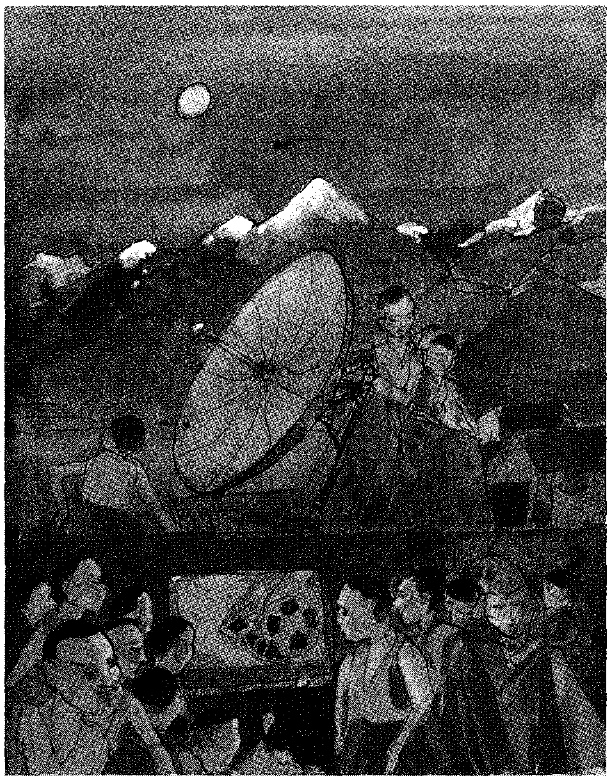

Khyentse Norbu's "The Cup."

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E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Union Square. . . . **THE INSIDER** (11/8/99): Cinema 3rd Avenue and Union Square. . . . **THE LIFE AND TIMES OF HANK GREENBERG** (1/24/00): Film Forum. . . . **MANSFIELD PARK** (11/29/99): Angelika Film Center and First & 62nd Cinemas. . . . **MR. DEATH:** Quad Cinemas. . . . **NIGHTMARE ALLEY:** Cinema Village. . . . **ONEGIN:** Cinema Village. . . . **PLAY IT TO THE BONE:** Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII and Union Square. . . . **STELLA DOES TRICKS:** The Screening Room. . . . **SWEET AND LOWDOWN** (12/6/99): First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square. . . . **TITUS:** Cinema II, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—The New York Film Critics Circle presents its choices for the best films of the 1990s. Feb. 5 at 2: "The End of Violence" (1997, Wim Wenders). . . . Feb. 5 at 4:30: "Waiting for Guffman" (1997, Christopher Guest). . . . Feb. 6 at 2: "Fallen Angels" (1997, Wong Kar-wai). . . . Feb. 6 at 4: "The Indian Runner" (1991, Sean Penn).

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—The films of director Dani Levy. Feb. 3 at 7, Feb. 5 at 5, and Feb. 6 at 7: "Get Lost" (1985; in German). . . . Feb. 3 and Feb. 5 at 9: "I Was on Mars" (1991; in German). . . . Feb. 4 at 7 and Feb. 6 at 5: "Without Me" (1993; in German) and "Silent Night" (1995; in German and French). . . . Feb. 4 and Feb. 7 at 9 and Feb. 5 at 7: "The Giraffe" (1999; in German). . . . ¶ A retrospective of the films of director Sergei Eisenstein. Feb. 3 at 8: "Strike" (1925; with Russian intertitles). . . . Feb. 4 at 8: "Potemkin" (†). . . . Feb. 5 at 8: "October" (1928; with Russian intertitles). . . . Feb. 6 at 2: "Old and New" (1929; with Russian intertitles).

BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770)—Feb. 2 at 7 and 9:30: "The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz" (1955, Luis Buñuel; in Spanish). . . . Feb. 3 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Peeping Tom" (1960, Michael Powell). . . . Feb. 4-5 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "The Red Shoes" (1948, Powell). . . . Feb. 6 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Chariots of Fire" (1981, Hugh Hudson). . . . Feb. 7 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "The Wild Party" (1929, Dorothy Arzner). . . . Feb. 8 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Hyenas" (1992; Djibril Mambetty; in Wolof).

Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Feb. 2-8: "Rear Window" (†). A restored print, using vintage dye-transfer Technicolor.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A retrospective of independent filmmaker Robert Kramer. Feb. 5 at 2 and Feb. 7 at 6: "FALN" (1965, Kramer and Peter Gessner) and "Scenes from the Class Struggle in Portugal" (1977, Kramer and Philip Spinelli; in Portuguese). . . . Feb. 5 at 5 and Feb. 8 at 3: "In the Country" (1966, Kramer). . . . Feb. 6 at 2: "The Edge" (1967, Kramer). . . . Feb. 6 at 4:15: "Milestones" (1975, Kramer and John Douglas). . . . Feb. 7 at 3: "Ice" (1969, Kramer). . . . ¶ Through Feb. 21: "The American Place: Landscape in the Early Western (and a Few Later Classics)," a retrospective tracing the development of the celluloid Western landscape. Feb. 1 at 2:30: "The Mollycoddle" (†). . . . Feb. 1 at 6 and Feb. 4 at 2:30: "Friends" (1912, D. W. Griffith) and "Stagecoach" (1939, John Ford). . . . Feb. 3 at 2:30: "Sierra Jim's Reformation" (1914, Jack O'Brien) and "The Big Trail" (1930, Raoul Walsh). . . . Feb. 3 at 6 and Feb. 8 at 2:30: "His Mother's Scarf" (1911, Griffith) and "My Darling Clementine" (1946, Ford). . . . Feb. 4 at 6 and Feb. 6 at 2: "Hands Up!" (1926, Clarence Badger). . . . Feb. 4 at 7:30 and Feb. 6 at 5: "Mr. 'Silent' Haskins/The Angel of Hell's Kitchen" (1915, Willam S. Hart) and "Pale Rider" (1985, Clint Eastwood). . . . Feb. 5 at 2: "The Savage Girl's Devotion" (1911, Fred J. Balsofer) and "The Outlaw Josey Wales" (1976, Eastwood). . . . Feb. 5 at 5 and Feb. 7 at 2:30: "Broken Ways" (1913, Griffith) and "O'Malley of the Mounted" (1921, Lambert Hillyer). . . . Feb. 7 at 6: "Over Silent Paths" (1910, Griffith) and Feb. 8 at 6: "A Misunderstood Boy" (1913, Griffith) and "Riders of the Purple Sage" (1925, Lynn Reynolds).

The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (332-2100)—Feb. 2-8: "Beloved/Friend" (1999, Ventura Pons; in Catalan). . . . Feb. 4-5 at midnight: "Pink Narcissus" (1971, James Bidgood).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through Feb. 24: "Frederick Wiseman: American Filmmaker," a retrospective of the noted documentarian's work. Feb. 2 at 1 and 6:45: "Essene" (1972). . . . Feb. 2 at 2:45: "Racetrack" (1985). . . . Feb. 2 at 5 and Feb. 6 at 9: "High School" (1968). . . . Feb. 2 at 8:30: "The Store" (1983). . . . Feb. 3 at 1 and 6:45: "Ballet" (1995). . . . Feb. 3 at 4:15: "Model" (1980). . . . Feb. 4 at 1 and 5:30 and Feb. 5 at 6:45: "Law and Order" (1969). . . . Feb. 4 at 2:45 and 9 and Feb. 5 at 4 and 8:30: "Juvenile Court" (1973). . . . Feb. 6 at 5:30: "Public Housing" (1997). . . . Feb. 7 at 1 and 6:45: "Central Park" (1989). . . . Feb. 7 at 4:15: "Zoo" (1993).

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Through Feb. 13: "The Cool World: Film and Video in America 1950-2000," eclectic shorts, documentaries, and videos from the museum's collection.

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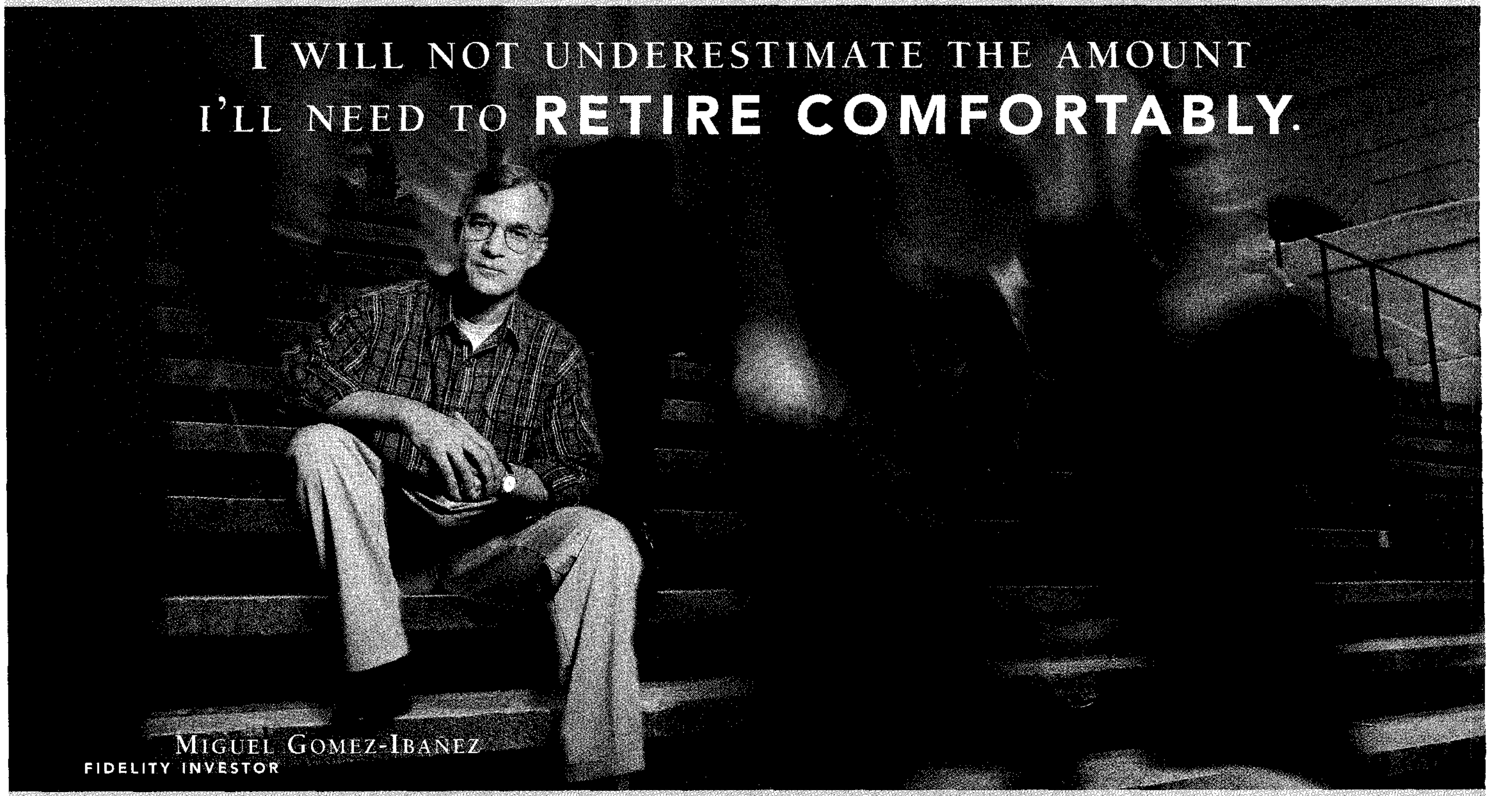
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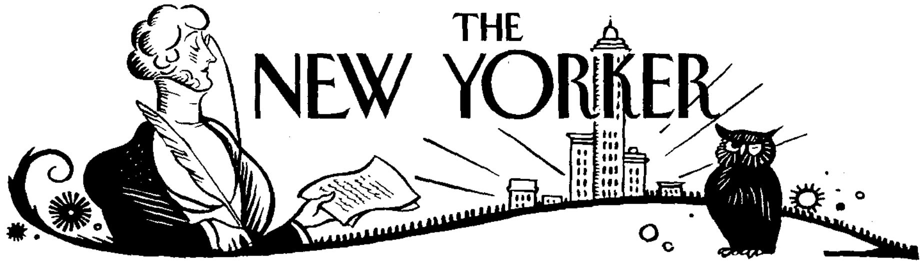


THE TALK OF THE TOWN

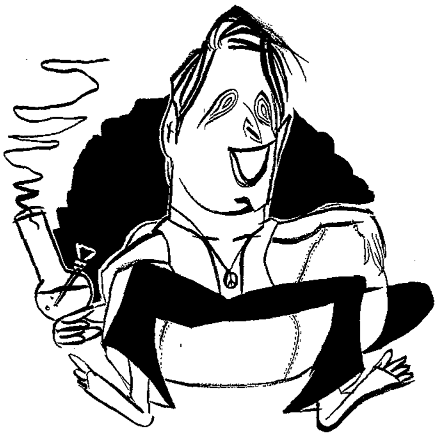
COMMENT

Gore's greatest bong hits.

A WEEK or so ago the latest chapter in the continuing saga of Al Gore's flaming youth erupted, as so many such stories do nowadays, from the subterranean depths where book publishing, journalism, and the Internet flow together. A new biography, full of purportedly titillating revelations, is set for publication a few months hence (in this case by Houghton Mifflin); a big magazine (in this case *Newsweek*, where the book's author, Bill Turque, works) buys the first serial rights; the magazine's editors, worried about the credibility of a source, develop qualms; an Internet reporter (in this case Jake Tapper, of *Salon*) gets a tip; and the gist makes its way via the tabloids to the mainstream papers (initially as a business-section "media" story) and the TV political gab shows, where, at this moment, it contentedly bubbles and pops.

The story, in brief, is that John Warnecke, a former friend of Gore's, says that in the early seventies, when the two were neighbors and cub reporters at the Nashville *Tennessean*, they smoked marijuana together many, many times—more often, arguably, than the "rare and infrequent" pot use to which the Vice-President has long admitted. The tale is not especially scandalous, but it is irresistible, and not just on account of the comic picture it conjures up of the profoundly unwild and uncrazy Gore as an enthusiastic doper—a big stiff with a big spliff. What gives the tale piquancy, even an element of tragic dignity, is the apparent texture of the relationship between the two men, who, like Prince Hal and Falstaff, were once as close as brothers and then drifted far apart when their destinies diverged. Both had grown up in the bosom of the Washington élite: Albert Gore, Sr., was a prominent Senator, while Warnecke's father, John Carl Warnecke, was a famous architect and was so close to Jacqueline Kennedy that she chose him to design her husband's gravesite. But young Gore's life took him on a path to Congress, the Senate, and the Vice-Presidency, while young Warnecke's led to alcoholism, depression, and obscurity. The two have not spoken, Warnecke says, since 1988, when Gore called him to ask him not to talk to the press about their pot-smoking.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL



Al Gore

At the level of national government, discussion of drug policy has been dormant since the nineteen-eighties ushered in the crack epidemic, just say no, three strikes and you're out, and the prison boom. The Clinton Administration, the first to be run by people who grew up with soft drugs, chose to surrender to the reigning orthodoxy. Yet the failure of the twenty-year "drug war" has never been more apparent. The most damning evidence can be found in the most recent "Fact Sheet" handed out by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy—the same office that is currently in hot water for offering television networks millions in financial incentives to insert anti-drug "messages" into entertainment programs. The surest measure of the success of drug interdiction and enforcement is price: if drugs are made harder to come by, the price must increase. According to the "Fact Sheet," however, the average price of a gram of pure cocaine dropped from around $300 in 1981 to around $100 in 1997; for heroin, the price fell from $3,500 to $1,100. Only marijuana has gotten more expensive, but its potency has more than kept pace. Interdiction has functioned mainly as a protectionist and R. & D. program for the burgeoning domestic marijuana industry, whose product, once the equivalent of iceberg lettuce, is now more akin to arugula. The nickel bag is long gone, but not the nickel high.

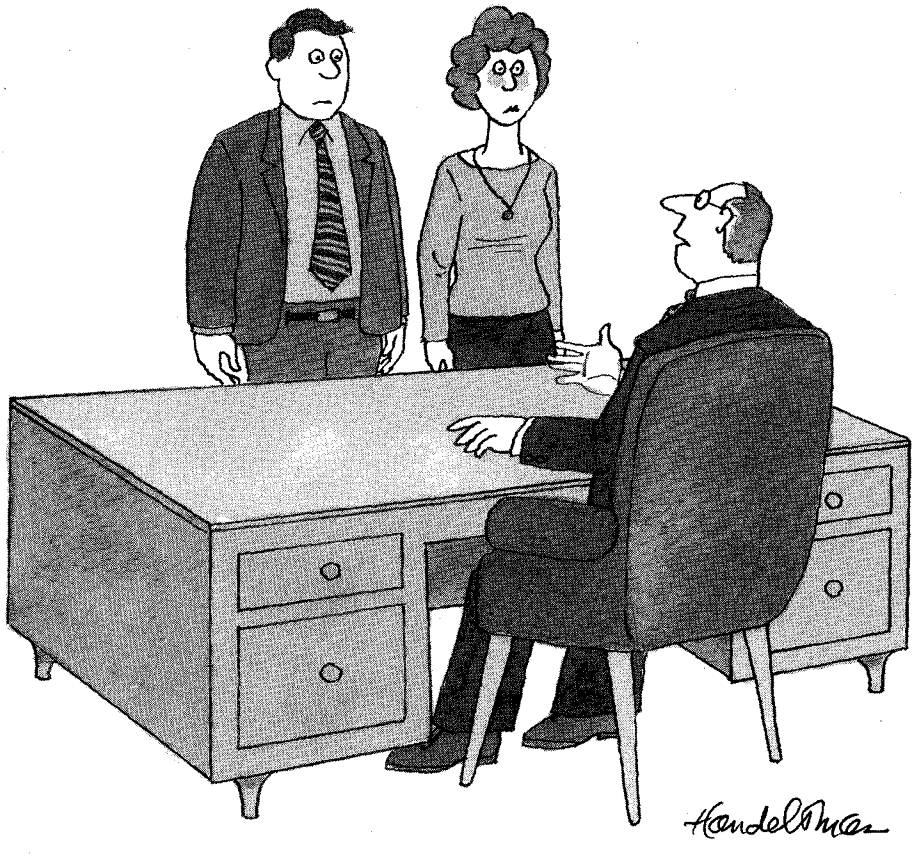
Meanwhile, federal spending on drug control has gone from around $1.5 billion to around $16 billion, mostly for interdiction and criminal justice. State and local spending has likewise multiplied, bringing the combined annual bill to something in the neighborhood of $40 billion. The prison population, which fifteen years ago was under three-quarters of a million, will cross the two-million mark sometime this month. Drug convictions account for the great bulk of that increase. The average drug offender in a federal prison serves more time than does the average rapist, burglar, or mugger. This costly jihad has scared off some casual users, but it has done nothing to reduce the number of hard-core addicts.

These facts have not much intruded themselves upon the current political campaign. Below the Presidential and would-be Presidential level, though, there are modest signs of popular discontent with the drug-policy status quo. The voters of eight states, from California to Maine, have passed initiatives approving the medical use of marijuana. There is growing interest in practical alternatives to the regime of punitive prohibition, particularly the approach known as "harm reduction"—which, in the words of Ethan Nadelmann, of the George Soros-funded Lindesmith Center, "aims to reduce the negative consequences of both drug use and drug prohibition, acknowledging that both will likely persist for the foreseeable future." Even a few politicians have begun to call for fundamental reform, including Congressman Tom Campbell, the probable Republican nominee in this year's California Senate race, and Governor Gary Johnson, of New Mexico, also a Republican, who has undertaken a sustained rhetorical crusade against what he regards as the folly of the drug war.

With varying degrees of candor, three of the four plausible Presidential candidates have admitted to (Gore and Bill Bradley) or alluded to (George W. Bush) past drug use. The fourth, John McCain, says he has never done drugs, but, as he said not long ago, he was already a prisoner of war when pot became popular in the military. ("Also, remember my age: sixty-three," he added apologetically.) Gore has taken the usual baby-boom politician's boilerplate—admitting one or two episodes of unenjoyable "experimentation"—a useful step further: for some years, he was an occasional (by his own account) or regular (by Warnecke's) marijuana user. During those years, he served in the Army in Vietnam, studied divinity and law, worked as a newspaper reporter, and prepared to run for Congress. Whatever the effect marijuana had on him (and he did, after all, once suggest putting a TV camera in orbit, aiming it straight down, and broadcasting a picture of the earth twenty-four hours a day on cable), his ability to function as a productive citizen does not appear to have been impaired.

One day, perhaps, an actual or potential President will acknowledge that there are meaningful distinctions to be drawn among different drugs and different ways of using and abusing them; and that there is something morally askew in a criminal-justice system that treats adults who sell drugs to other adults (let alone adults who merely grow marijuana plants) as harshly as it does violent, predatory criminals. That day can hardly come too soon, though when it does a great change may have already begun. "I wouldn't be doing this if I didn't think this was a Berlin Wall-type situation," Governor Johnson, of New Mexico, told an interviewer recently, explaining why he is willing to brave the indignation of the drug warriors. "You're going to get a critical mass here, and all of a sudden it's just going to topple."

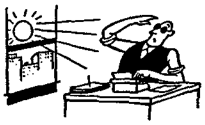
—HENDRIK HERTZBERG



"You can't be insured, Harry and Louise, because of your preëxisting condition."

INK

A new novel sizes up the world of glossy magazines.



TED HELLER'S new novel, "Slab Rat," is a satire of the New York magazine world, and concerns the ambitions of a young associate editor at a glitzy magazine, *It*, that is part of a glossy-magazine empire called Versailles Publishing. Heller's protagonist, Zachary Post, is something like a male Bridget Jones, but with a far nastier disposition: he obsesses over which of his male colleagues is ascending the masthead more quickly than he is, and over which of his female colleagues it would be most strategic for him to bed. The cultural mores of *It* and Versailles are closely observed: the editors grasping their bottles of designer water; the editorial assistants with "hair you could see your reflection in"; the editorial overuse of such expressions as "enfant terrible," "wunderkind," and "Young Turk."

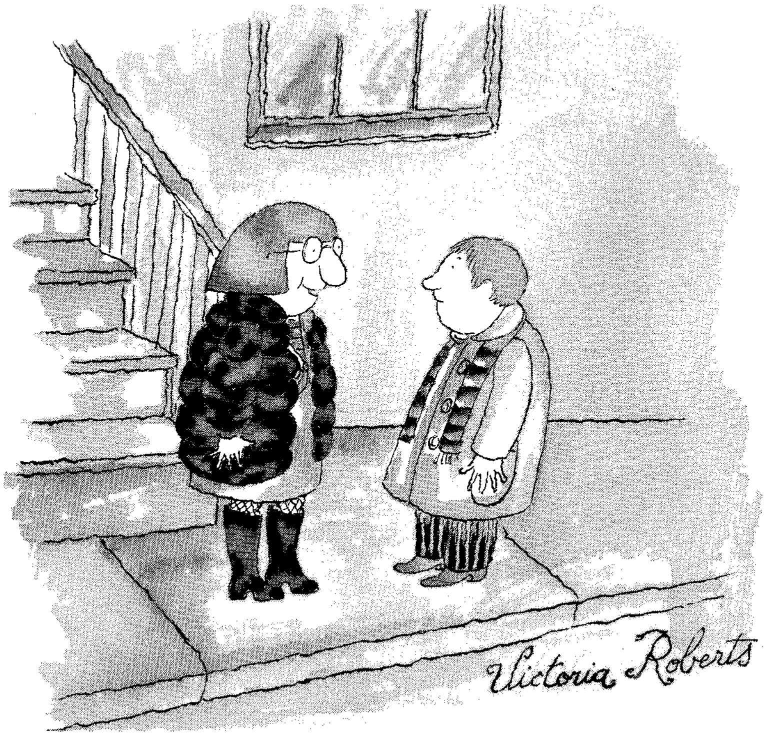
Although this is his first novel, Heller points out that, at forty-three, he is too old to be an enfant terrible or a Young Turk. "I'm a 'dying breed.' That's what they call anyone over forty," he said the other day, when he was persuaded to visit the lobby of the Condé Nast Building and reminisce about his experience as an employee of a glossy-magazine empire. "I was at *Vanity Fair* for two weeks, filling in for someone who had had a sex-change operation," he said. Heller did a stint at *Details*, too, which did not end happily. "I have a theory that, once you are over thirty, the only person allowed to yell at you should be your spouse or girlfriend," he said. "Someone yelled at me, and I gave a minute's notice."

Heller also had a brief encounter with the world of *Vogue*. "I worked in the clothing business for six years, pushing a rack. I was the person you see on the street with no shirt on. One day, I had to wheel a rack of clothing to *Vogue*, and the women there were gorgeous. I asked if there was a men's room, because I saw no men there. They said there was no bathroom for men. I realized, fairly recently, that they were lying to me—of course there was a bathroom for men on that floor! They just didn't want me to use it."

As Heller, who has a shaved head and wears wire-rimmed glasses, browsed at the magazine stand in the building's lobby, he confessed that he is not actually very interested in magazines, nor does he understand their conventions, such as the popular technique of inserting numbers into cover lines. "Why would 'Ten Great Orgasms' sell better than 'Great Orgasms' for *Cosmo*?" he asked. He is the son of the late novelist Joseph Heller, and he originally thought about being a playwright. "When I worked in the clothing business, I went to see 'Glengarry Glen Ross,' and I told my boss, who was my best friend, to go and see it, and we started writing a play about the clothing business. This place called the Mark Taper Forum ended up doing a workshop production of it. I thought, This is easy, I am going to be a famous playwright, and I quit my job." That was his first, and only, dramatic success, and thereafter Heller moved into magazines, starting at *Spy*. "I did 'Separated at Birth,'" he said. "I still have residues of that—whenever I see a famous person, I think, He looks just like So-and-So." Six years ago, he found his current job, as photo editor and senior writer at the kids' magazine *Nickelodeon*.

Heller said that the difference between his protagonist and himself is that Zachary Post wants to belong in Versailles, whereas he knew that he never would. Nonetheless, he revealed that he'd learned some glossy-magazine ways in spite of himself when a young woman wearing a pale pink scarf sauntered by. "There was no pashmina in my day, and there is not going to be any in about two weeks, either," he said. "I can't believe that someone is still wearing it."

—REBECCA MEAD

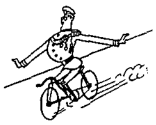


"They should just ask Elián González who he wants to be when he grows up, Gloria Estefan or the Buena Vista Social Club."

• •

WALL STREET FOLLIES

The fastest Internet fat cats on wheels.



In the helter-skelter, burnout world of Internet start-ups, employee loyalty can be a fleeting thing. But Danny Uhl, who careers around the streets of Manhattan on his bicycle for a living, recalls, with a kind of Jedi clarity, the moment he became a company man. He was pedalling his personally retooled KHS hybrid mountain/street bike up the west side of Fourth Avenue after dropping off a batch of videos for the instant Internet delivery service Kozmo.com. "Riding the streets, you get a little feeling in your belly when things aren't quite right," he said the other day. "A cab cut right in front of me, and, the next thing I know, I smack into the back of this double-parked van." The cabdriver never stopped, and Uhl, who learned his riding tricks growing up in Flushing, Queens, broke his nose and three front teeth. "Most times, when a messenger wrecks himself on the street, he's out of luck," he said, smiling a big smile. "I've still got to go back for my root canal, but Kozmo fixed me up; they paid for everything."

One day last week outside the Kozmo.com warehouse, on Twelfth Street, the weather was "brick" (really, really cold, in rider terminology), so messengers came and went bundled in Kozmo-issue Gore-Tex wind suits and blue Kozmo watch caps. The company is the brainchild of Joseph Park, a twenty-seven-year-old ex-Goldman, Sachs banker, who grew impatient sitting around waiting for his Internet book and CD purchases to arrive. In two years, Kozmo.com has mushroomed into a national enterprise, with frenetic delivery operations in Seattle, Boston, Washington, D.C., San Francisco, and, soon, L.A. and Chicago. Three hundred riders are on call in Manhattan alone, delivering anything from tandoori sandwiches ($6.95), to pregnancy-test kits ($15.99), to high-tech Sony DVD players ($295) within an hour of a cyber order.

The bike messenger—after years of abuse from cops and irate cabbies, and, thanks to the fax machine, near obsolescence—is undergoing a renaissance in wired Manhattan. "If you're a professional messenger, it's a gold rush out there," says Michael Theodore, a rumpled Harvard M.B.A. who is the general manager of Kozmo's New York office. Gruff bike renegades with street names like Caz and Valentine are being wooed with higher salaries, health benefits, even a whiff of stock options.

Kozmo.com marketing technicians estimate that their riders circulate a thousand Krispy Kreme doughnuts around the city on any given day. Aside from videos and computer games, the most popular "minimart" items are AA batteries ($3.79) and Ultra Thin Trojan condoms ($1.99). Riders are instructed not to peek at their deliveries, so customers won't get embarrassed.

New Kozmo riders attend orientation seminars on the benefits of establishing eye contact, among other consumer-friendly techniques. "These are type-A guys who will do anything to make their run," says Theodore, a start-up veteran. "So far, nobody's died. We've had a few guys 'doored': you're going down the street, and a parked car opens its door, and you run into it. We've had guys break arms that way. They come back to work with bruises and cuts, saying 'Give me a bike, I'm ready to go.' We tell them the customer may not really want to see them standing on their doorstep with blood all over their parka."

Kozmo.com hasn't gone public yet, but in early January a group of investors, including Amazon.com's Jeff Bezos, purchased twenty-three per cent of the company for a hundred million dollars. Now Kozmo executives are looking for more warehouse space. They envision delivering a smorgasbord of appliances, even clothes, to their housebound public.

"We appeal to the professional couch potato," said a rider in the lounge who called himself Green. Green chose his nickname, he said, "because I make a lot of money" and had been calculating different stock-option angles. "Say we go public within a year, and the market trends for Internet I.P.O.s hold up. The way this company's growing, I see the stock splitting within six months." Danny Uhl listened and shook his head. "Stocks is a pipe dream," he said as riders kept clattering in from the cold, wrapped in their messenger shoulder bags and heavy Kryptonite chain locks. "You gotta be a rock to ride out there today," he said. "I give anyone credit who makes it through the winter." —ADAM PLATT

THE PICTURES

A controversial filmmaker turns his eye on a small town.

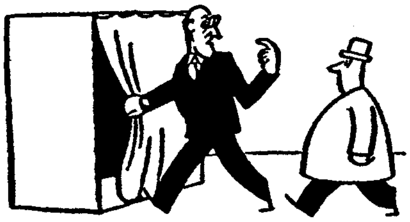
MOST evenings, you won't find the documentary filmmaker Frederick Wiseman at a place like Sistina, a soigné restaurant on the Upper East Side; more often he's sequestered in his editing room, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he spends months on end immersed in footage shot over the course of a few weeks. "A lot of editing is very boring," he said. "The longer it goes on, though, the more absorbing it gets, because of the feeling that you're discovering the film." He's spent a big part of his life there since 1966, when he made his notorious first film, "Titicut Follies," about the Bridgewater, Massachusetts, prison for the criminally insane. Although critics praised the film, its unsparing view of the harsh conditions at the prison created problems for the state, which subsequently banned it, except for private screenings, until 1991. Since "Titicut," Wiseman has gone on to make twenty-nine more films, most of them funded by grants. Last summer, he completed "Belfast, Maine," about a working-class town on the Maine coast, which will have its television première on PBS on February 4th. (A retrospective of Wiseman's films is also showing at the Film Society of Lincoln Center through February 24th.)

Wiseman, who is seventy, has penetrating green owl eyes, longish graying hair, exceptionally thick fingers, and a deadpan, skeptical expression. The other evening at Sistina, he was wearing an olive-green corduroy suit, a striped shirt, and a claret knitted necktie. Reading glasses dangled from a cord around his neck. He said that he had wanted to make a film about Belfast since 1982—he knew something of the town, having spent summers near there for years—but he kept getting swept up in other projects. "I thought a film about a small community would fit into my series of films on American institutions," he said. Nearly all of his previous films, including "High School," "Welfare," "Hospital," "The Store," and "Meat," are part of this series, which began with "Titicut." "Belfast," which takes the viewer through potato and sardine and salmon factories, a hospital emergency room, and a tourist gift shop and into the homes of welfare recipients, is a kind of anthology of these earlier films. "I hesitate to use the word 'joke,'" Wiseman said. "But that's the joke of the film."

Wiseman avoids saying much about his work, preferring that viewers sift through the material and draw their own conclusions. He does not interview his subjects, and in his films there are no explanatory voice-overs and no emotional prompting from background music. "'Belfast' is about ordinary experience," he said simply. An occasional car passes along a rain-soaked rural road. A social worker picks nits from the hair of one of her clients, a young mother who is already bereft of a few teeth. Another client, a beefy, bald man, reveals that he's been in three Maine mental institutions. He admits that he smokes a lot—three or four packs a day. "I've cut down a little," he says. "I used to smoke seven or eight."

"One of the things 'Belfast' deals with is different aspects of work," Wiseman said, adding that he was surprised that so much of what he documented had to do with the search for and merchandising of animals. "There's a lot of killing of animals in the film, but that's rural life," he said. One of the film's more devastating moments occurs when a trapper shoots a coyote caught in a steel trap between the eyes, but Wiseman bristles at the suggestion that in filming it he was making a statement. "I'm not trying to take sides about trapping!" he said. "I mean, my mother had a fox stole—with a little head. At the risk of sounding cold and hard, which I may be, I didn't feel any sorrier for the coyote than I did for the cow," he added, referring to his film "Meat," which follows a cow's journey from pasture to grocery shelf. "Or the salmon," he said, looking down at his plate of exquisitely prepared fish.

—MARY HAWTHORNE



THE CAMPAIGN

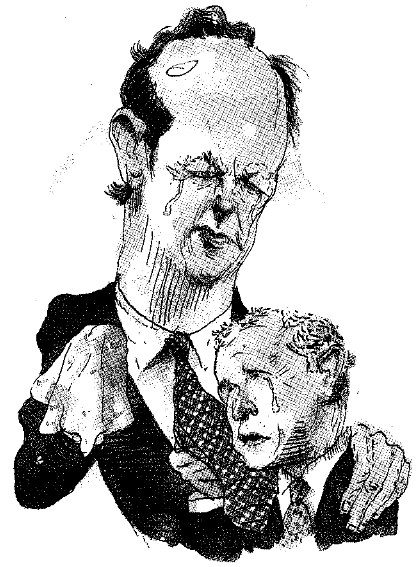
Politics without tears.

A FEW days before the 1992 New Hampshire primary, an exhausted Bill Clinton was confronted by a confused and angry old woman during a meeting in a Nashua senior center. Clinton was in the midst of not one but two scandals: Gennifer Flowers and the draft-dodging controversy. His campaign appeared ready to collapse. And the woman was ranting semi-coherently. Gradually, she managed to explain that she didn't have enough money to pay for both food and pharmaceuticals. She began to cry. And suddenly Clinton was squatting down with his arms around the woman, crying along with her. It was a defining Clinton moment: an epiphany.

The last days before the New Hampshire primary—the densest, most enervating period of the Presidential-selection process—is a time when candidates tend to reveal their true natures, for good or for ill. Both Bill Bradley and George W. Bush have had emotional episodes in recent days, perhaps defining ones. But their epiphanies haven't had much impact on the press or the public, or—more to the point—on the trajectory of their campaigns; in fact, both candidates were struggling in New Hampshire.

Bradley's moment was almost exactly like Clinton's, but less so. For one thing, it was prearranged. A woman named Cathy Perry had telephoned campaign headquarters and volunteered to share a health-care horror story. When Bradley called on her, she explained that she and her husband worked three jobs without health insurance, then described how she'd taken her teen-age son to the doctor to be treated for strep throat. As she was paying for the visit, the boy apologized to her for getting sick. Bradley's eyes welled up, though there was no subsequent moisture or huggery; the former Senator is not an effusive man. But, in the days that followed, Bradley finally began to speak with some real passion on the stump. At each stop, he linked his new sense of mission to Cathy Perry's story. "It reminded me why I got involved in politics," he said in Des Moines, just before the Iowa caucuses. "Young people aren't very interested these days, because politics seems only to be about winning, polling, spinning, tactics. But this can be a noble profession. It can make the spirit soar. It can carry our hearts and minds forward to a new day."

Too little, too late. Bradley's moments of passion were still wrapped in vast, woolly swaths of tired rhetoric. Worse, Bradley appeared dull and draggy compared with Al Gore, especially in the final debate before the New Hampshire primary, where even his assaults seemed to unfold in slow motion—there are few political postures less compelling than listless righteousness.



Bill Bradley and George W. Bush

BARRY BLITT

George W. Bush had no single moment as telling as Bradley's with Cathy Perry, but there has been a series of quietly revelatory incidents, and the candidate revealed seems a decent fellow who is a bit bemused by the ferocity of the electoral process. Bush began to show something more of himself when he visited Teen Challenge, an extremely successful, faith-based drug-and-alcohol-treatment program in Colfax, Iowa. His speech there was humble and candid, and a far more convincing profession of faith than the rote, tepid stump performances he'd been giving; it was unintentional evidence that this campaign has been, for him, more an obligation than a mission. "Just like you, I'm on a walk," he told the young people at Teen Challenge, speaking of his own troubles with alcohol. "I want you to know that your life's walk is shared by a lot of people. Even some who wear suits."

This was followed by an even more candid late-night confession of weariness to a handful of reporters on the plane out from Iowa, after Bush won a solid victory in the caucuses. He missed his kids, his cats, his home. He didn't like sleeping on the road. He brought his own feather pillow with him. "Don't you?" he asked the reporters. Bush performed well in his final New Hampshire debate; the smirk has been stowed. But his hair was slightly mussed, and his eyes were moist and rheumy; he appeared vulnerable, for once—too palpably human to be considered a political juggernaut.

As opposed to Al Gore, whose candidacy suddenly seems buffed and muscular, and moving in the opposite emotional direction from Bush's and Bradley's (and, for that matter, from that of John McCain, whose honesty got him in "trouble" again, when he implied that abortion might be an option discussed if his teen-age daughter became pregnant). Gore seems to be getting tougher, and more remote. He has abandoned the marathon question-and-answer sessions that marked his reborn campaign in the late fall. He doesn't have many press conferences. He never was much of a storyteller, but now his political rhetoric—especially in debates—is completely fat-free, a shower of facts and tactics, the product of a fearsome intelligence, which he has used like a scimitar, slashing Bradley at every turn.

Gore, too, had an intensely emotional moment in the week before the New Hampshire vote—at least, one imagines that it must have been so. On the day of his smashing triumph in the Iowa caucuses, his old friend and political mentor Bob Squier died, of cancer, at the age of sixty-five. The Vice-President released a condolence statement, but he mentioned Squier's death only briefly in his victory speech. One can't imagine Bill Clinton ever letting such a moment pass without a public tear or two. But we've had nearly eight years of flagrant public humanity now, which may be why campaign epiphanies aren't as potent as they used to be.—JOE KLEIN

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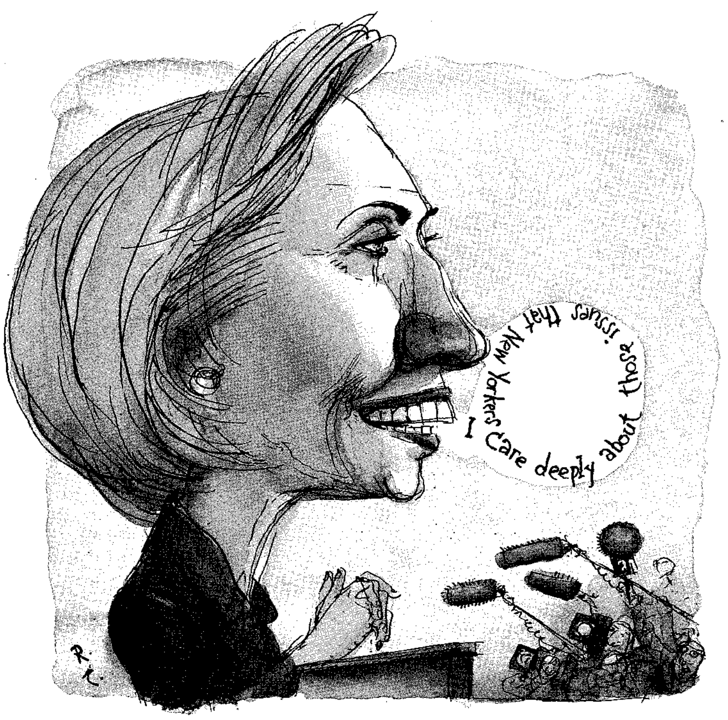
THE POLITICAL SCENE

RUNNING ON EMPATHY

Hillary Clinton wants to show New York that even a carpetbagger can care.

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

In any campaign, there are big lies and there are little ones. The difference is not so much moral as practical, just as it is in everyday life. What might at first have been fascinating about the Clintons but is, by now, mostly just maddening is the deliberate muddle they have made of this distinction.


I Care deeply about those issues that New Yorkers

A lot of the First Lady's blunders so far have been those of an outsider.

RICHARD THOMPSON

Last month, the First Couple completed their long-awaited move—"move" here being understood in the loosest possible sense. If not yet the most photographed five-bedroom home in America, 15 Old House Lane is well on its way, and the elegant lines of its gambrel roofs are probably by now familiar to most New Yorkers. Naturally, the Clintons were concerned about the symbolism of the event, and they decided, at the last minute, that the President would have to arrive with his wife, even though that meant putting off their entrance until after dark. The next morning, in what is known in the trade as a carefully orchestrated appearance, Bill strode outside, put his arm around Hillary, and spoke about how happy he was to be in Chappaqua.

"We're seeing some things we haven't seen since we moved to the White House, and some things we haven't seen in seventeen years," the President told reporters, striking a theme that Mrs. Clinton returned to, even more emotionally, a few days later, at a news conference in White Plains. "You know," she said, "it's hard to describe, but when we began pulling things out of storage, which I'm still doing, I mean, we have wedding presents we've never gotten a chance to use, and so I'm putting them up in cabinets and unpacking boxes with mementos people gave us or things that I have from my grandmother that I haven't seen for a long time." Then she added, in all apparent earnestness, "It's a very, you know, great personal experience for both of us."

The first year of Mrs. Clinton's New

York experience is just ending, and on Sunday she is scheduled to announce officially her candidacy for the United States Senate. Things are not, on the whole, going well. Her halting and always implausible campaign has, so far, consisted mostly of gaffes, wasted opportunities, and prurient questions from the press. Just two weeks after she and her husband unpacked their things, the First Lady was ambushed by reporters in Buffalo and forced to declare publicly that, no, she did not intend to get a divorce, nor had she ever had sex with Vince Foster. Meanwhile, literally hundreds of journalists show up whenever she does anything the slightest bit noteworthy, and when she is in control of the agenda she uses the occasion to say at some length almost nothing. After visiting forty counties in the state—an accomplishment she recently boasted about to David Letterman—she keeps coming back to the same tautology: she cares deeply about those issues about which New Yorkers deeply care.

When Mrs. Clinton first decided to take the race on, it was a bold act that seemed to demand an even bolder follow-through. How does someone mount a Senate campaign from a state where she has never lived if she has no record of accomplishment to point to and is, on top of all that, widely distrusted? The answer that is emerging is, like the First Lady's sentimental musings on her tchotchkes, at once stranger and more ordinary than could have been expected: she is planning, it seems, to base her candidacy on the quality of her concern, the heartfeltness of her convictions, and the depth of her feeling—to run, in other words, on her sincerity.

MRS. CLINTON likes to talk about the issues, or, perhaps more accurately, to talk about talking about the issues. Her favorites are education and health care, which polls show to be precisely the same ones New York voters put at the top of their lists. Often, when the discussion seems to be headed in a direction she doesn't care for, Mrs. Clinton invokes "the issues" to reorient it. What she means by the term, however, is a bit slippery.

"What's important to me are the issues," she said at a recent press conference at the Westchester County Democratic Committee headquarters, in White Plains. "I mean, who, at the end of the

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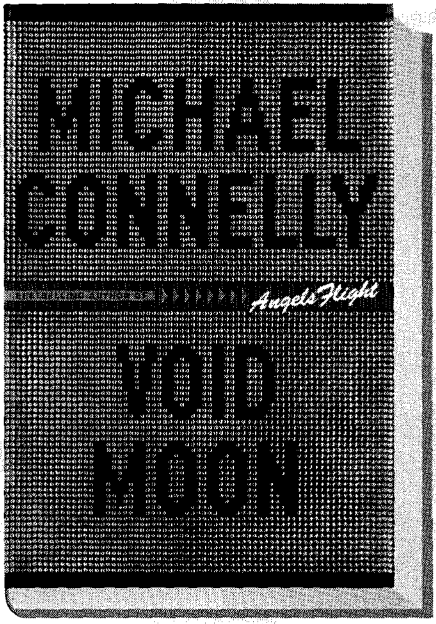

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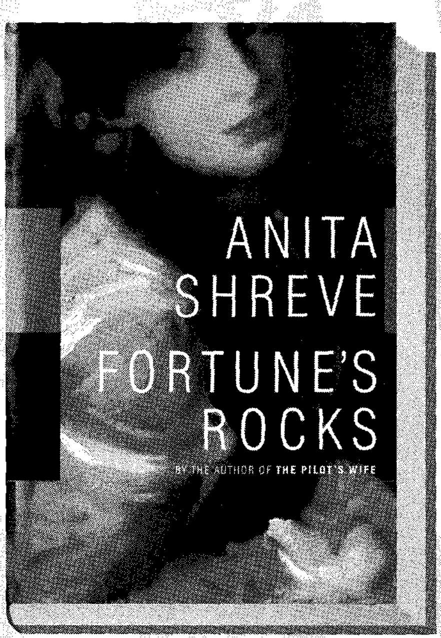

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PERSONALITY - PASSION - KNOWLEDGE - COMMUNITY - CHARACTER

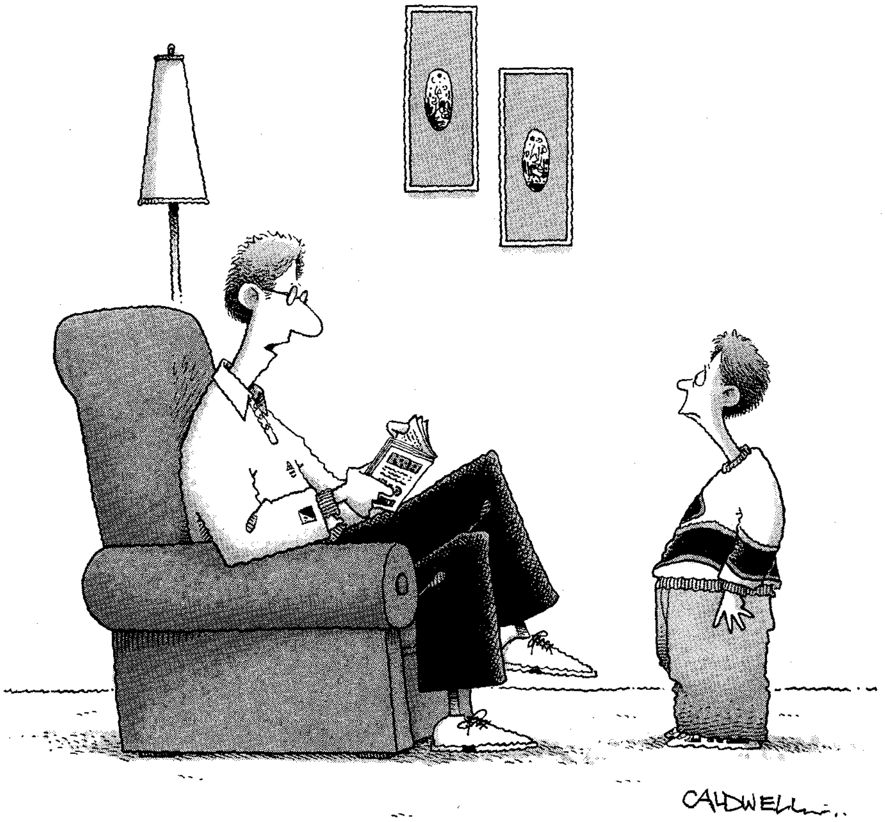
day, is going to improve education for the children of New York? Who's going to improve health care for the people of New York? Who's going to bring people together? And that's what I'm going to be talking about."

Later, she observed, along the same lines, "I think that the real issue ought to be who cares about the children of New York City, and who will work day in and day out to advance the interests of the education system."

In principle, at least, questions of public policy are not equivalent to questions of disposition. But Mrs. Clinton insistently conflates the two. A few weeks ago, I went to hear her address an interfaith breakfast at Riverside Church, in upper Manhattan. Like most of her appearances so far, this one was before an audience predisposed in her favor; in addition to clergy members and social activists, there were several prominent Democrats in the crowd, including former mayor David Dinkins. Twenty tables had been set up in the church's large vaulted assembly hall, each with eight seats. Mrs. Clinton arrived at the event half an hour late, dressed, as she almost always is these days, in a dark pants suit with a long flared jacket. She proceeded to make her way around all the tables until she had shaken hands with every guest. Then she moved on to the kitchen staff.

Mrs. Clinton alludes often to the "challenges before us," and also to "commitment" and "hard work" and the importance of "bringing people together" or, alternatively, "to the table." She is emphatically in favor of doing more to "support" people. "Parents are a child's first teachers, and we have to do a better job of supporting families in that most important function," she said at one point at Riverside Church. "All children can learn, if they are given the support," she added a little bit later on. "I want to work very hard to make sure that the Congress supports school districts that are supporting schools that are making the changes that will really help students learn," she said just a few moments after that.

In putting together her campaign staff, Mrs. Clinton has rehabilitated several former White House aides who had fallen out of favor; most of them share a pronounced liberal bent. Harold Ickes, a senior adviser to the campaign, for example, is a onetime aide to Jesse Jackson who left the Clinton Administration after being passed over for White House chief of staff. Mandy



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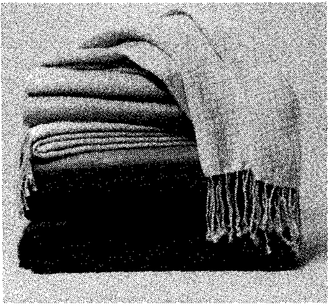

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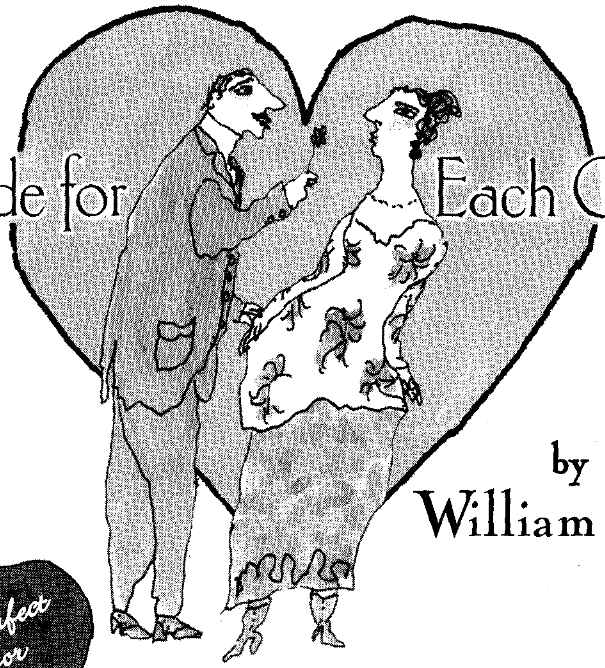
Grunwald, another top campaign adviser, was one of the aides the President blamed, quite probably unfairly, for the Democrats' loss of Congress in 1994. The First Lady's inner circle, as the Giuliani camp likes to point out, now bears a strong resemblance to the President's in the days before he took up triangulation. It is thus tempting to read her freehanded promises of "support" and her frequent protestations of "concern" as evidence of an ideological program in code. But that would be almost too generous.

As unsympathetic as reporters may be to the First Lady, they have, in a desperate search for news from her campaign, obscured the extent to which her remarks routinely drift off into a haze of good intentions. Mrs. Clinton brings to her public appearances a great deal of poise and seriousness of purpose, which, more than anything she actually says, is what the events tend to be about. This was the singular insight of the First Lady's unprecedented "listening tour," during which she tried to elevate nodding into a kind of political philosophy: so long as the "issue" is attitude, a politician doesn't have to say much of anything to make a point.

"I think it's appropriate to take a few minutes to reflect on some of the issues that people of faith have in common, and from my perspective, as I have travelled extensively now through New York and been in the company of so many different New Yorkers from so many different walks of life, I agree that the challenges before us, as individuals, as members and leaders of the community of faith, as those who already hold positions of public responsibility and those who seek them, that we do all share and should be committed to an understanding of how we make progress, but we define that progress broadly, deeply, and profoundly," Mrs. Clinton told the crowd at Riverside Church, giving special emphasis to the words "deeply" and "profoundly."

In New York, there is no right answer to the question "Are you going to march in the St. Patrick's Day parade?"—just degrees of wrongness. Though the parade may seem, to outsiders, mostly to be an excuse for public drunkenness, it is also a forum for the long-running battle over the rights of religious organizations to exclude homosexuals. Mrs.



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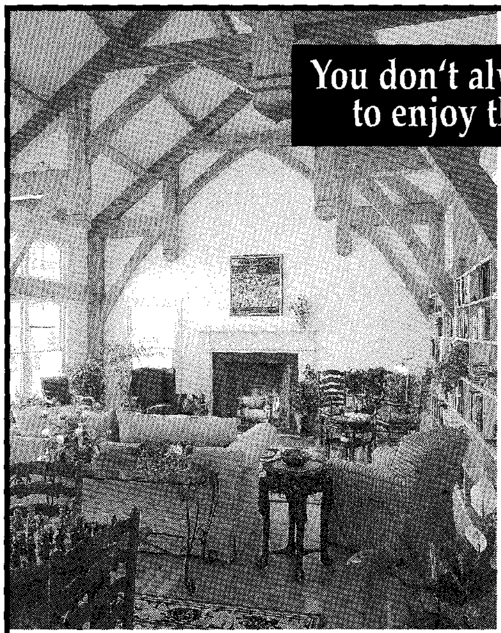

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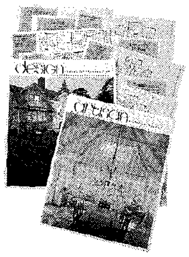

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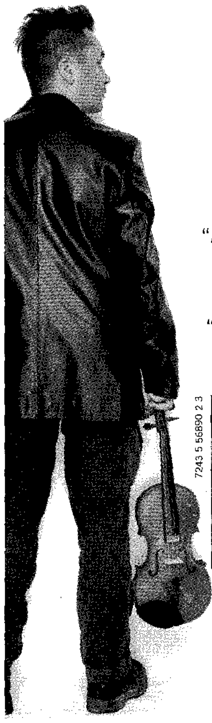

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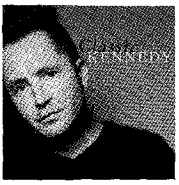

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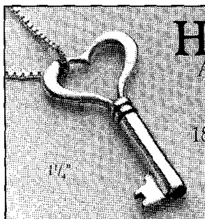

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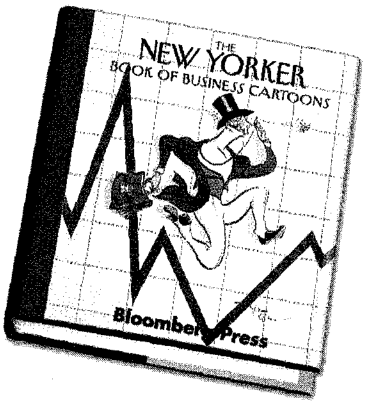
Clinton apparently did not realize this when, back in early December, she blithely declared, "I would hope so!"

A lot of the First Lady's blunders so far have been those of an outsider: first, the donning of the Yankees cap; then the reminiscences about a childhood pit stop in Elmira; then the revelation of a Jewish stepgrandfather—all were efforts to find a connection, no matter how piddling, to her adoptive state. But even taking into account the inevitable hazards of carpetbagging, Mrs. Clinton has proved maladroit at it. Sometime after the contretemps over clemency for members of a Puerto Rican terrorist organization (she first supported it, then opposed it) but before the contretemps over embracing Suha Arafat (she said she did not realize Mrs. Arafat was accusing the Israelis of poisoning Palestinian children), a lot of Democratic politicians in New York began to lose heart.

In public, the tone of their pronouncements about the race has grown increasingly wan, abstracted, and noncommittal. In private, they mostly just complain. "I don't think she has the instincts for it," one Democratic elected official from the city told me. Of Mrs. Clinton and her advisers, "They seem to have a tin ear for New York politics," a longtime party activist from upstate said. "She's got nobody who understands the grit of it all," another influential New York City Democrat griped to me. Indeed, Mrs. Clinton's campaign was, until quite recently, essentially a Washington-based operation; not until December, when she hired a campaign manager, Bill de Blasio, a former aide to Housing Secretary Andrew Cuomo, did anyone of real authority in the organization even live inside the state.

What, exactly, Mrs. Clinton is doing in New York is the dead cat in the eaves of her campaign. It affects everything, and it is the one thing that no one wants to deal with. Right before the Clintons' move, one of her advisers told me, in all apparent seriousness, that after the novelty of her living in Chappaqua wore off people would forget that where she came from had ever been an issue. The First Lady declined to be interviewed for this article, or, for that matter, for more than a hundred others, but at one of her recent press conferences I did manage to shout out a question about whether the fact that she was

Very funny business, indeed!



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not a New Yorker was relevant to the race. In response, Mrs. Clinton said she didn't want to presume too much: "I would not prejudge how that decision will be made by any individual New Yorker." Then she steered the discussion back to the depth of her feeling. "I think it's fair that people say to themselves, 'Well, I want to be sure that she's committed to New York, that she cares about New York, and that she's going to fight for New York,'" she said. "And I think I will be able to demonstrate all three of those attributes during this campaign."

When pollsters ask voters what they most dislike about Mrs. Clinton, her not being from the state is at the top of the list. Last winter, before she had started shopping for real estate and when the race was still largely hypothetical, the First Lady was leading the Mayor in the polls by more than ten points; now they have reversed positions. Particularly disturbing to Party leaders is the reception she is getting from other suburbanites: among voters in this group she is more than fifteen points behind Giuliani. More ominous still is the response of other women. When blacks, who overwhelmingly favor the First Lady, are taken out of the sample, she trails Giuliani among female voters by several points.

Whatever this gap is about, it is clearly not about the issues, at least as conventionally defined. To the extent that Mrs. Clinton's campaign has a strategy, it is to press her inherent advantage on abortion rights, the environment, and gun control, as well as on health care and education. Without offering anything very substantive on these topics—Mrs. Clinton will not even say, for example, whether or not she still believes in the basic precepts of the health-care plan she proposed seven years ago—she can nevertheless count on a majority of New York voters assuming they agree with her. In recent weeks, she has taken up what will doubtless become a major theme of her campaign: the vulnerability of Roe v. Wade and the makeup of the next Supreme Court. To eke out a victory, Mrs. Clinton hopes to inspire a heavy minority turnout in the city, to convince suburbanites that the Mayor does not, in the end, share their values, and to appeal to job-hungry districts upstate with a message of economic hope. All of which is to say that she is aiming to win as a fairly ordinary Democratic candidate, in spite of her extraordinary history and the resentments it has inspired.

The Mayor's pollster, Frank Luntz, told me that a few months ago he conducted his own "listening tour" of New York to assess the First Lady's strengths and weaknesses. He said that he was struck by how much bad feeling there was out there toward her that defied reasoned analysis. Women in particular expressed their distaste in strong but inchoate terms. "The theme was 'I don't like her,'" he said. "Why? 'I just don't!'" Luntz, of course, is a biased listener, but two prominent Democratic officials told me, independently, that they had noticed much the same pattern in talking to female friends and constituents. They used the same word to sum up their findings: the feeling, they said, was "visceral."

FOR weeks, Mrs. Clinton declined David Letterman's invitation, but when she finally appeared on his show, smiling, kidding, and exchanging flattery with the "Big Guy," it was hard to see why. Their conversation was the closest that Mrs. Clinton has come for more than six months to providing an extended sitdown interview, and as a media event it could hardly have gone more smoothly. New Yorkers got a chance to see the First Lady face the tough questions in what turned out to be the safest possible context: Letterman broached the delicate issue of her not being from New York but did not press the matter, and before giving her a "pop quiz" on state trivia—state bird, state tree, and so on—he warned her about it in advance. Mrs. Clinton was smart enough to laugh at herself and self-possessed enough to do so in a way that, for all the event's evident staginess, seemed genuine.

It is a disarming fact about Mrs. Clinton that, in spite of all she has been through, she retains an implicit faith in herself and in her ability to appeal to voters on a personal, even intimate, level. If the calculated emptiness of her rhetoric often makes her seem detached, under the right circumstances she can still manage to project a sense of warmth and engagement and, finally, sincerity. This is

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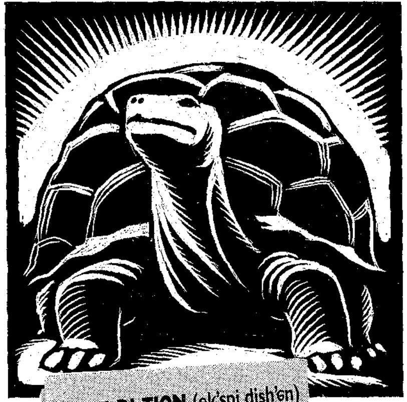

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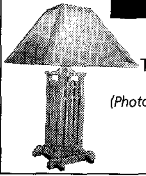

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a considerable strength in a politician, and it explains what may seem, on the face of it, to be her self-defeating electoral strategy. More than one Democratic official suggested to me that the key to the campaign would be how many New Yorkers the First Lady could get out and meet face to face, and while in practical terms this is a dubious notion—just five per cent of the New York electorate is five hundred thousand handshakes—it does get at something important about the race.

Recently, I met up with Mrs. Clinton on the two-day swing through western New York during which she was harried by questions about divorce and adultery. By the time she got to her final stop, at a senior center in Cheektowaga, a suburb of Buffalo, members of her press entourage were happier than they had been for weeks. The First Lady's press secretary, Howard Wolfson, meanwhile, looked as if he were about to be sick.

Whatever Mrs. Clinton might have been feeling, she didn't show it. A crowd of more than two hundred had gathered to meet her in a huge room decorated with foil snowflakes. Over and over again, elderly women told the First Lady that she looked prettier or skinnier than she does on TV, and she thanked each with the effusive surprise of someone hearing such a compliment for the first time. One woman was so choked up to meet Mrs. Clinton that she could barely speak. Another launched into a lengthy, and, to me, largely incomprehensible account of how her mother's house had been foreclosed, and how some sort of law ought to be enacted to prevent such things from happening. The First Lady listened intently, and then, when it was all over, said in a tone of deep appreciation, "Thanks so much for bringing that to my attention."

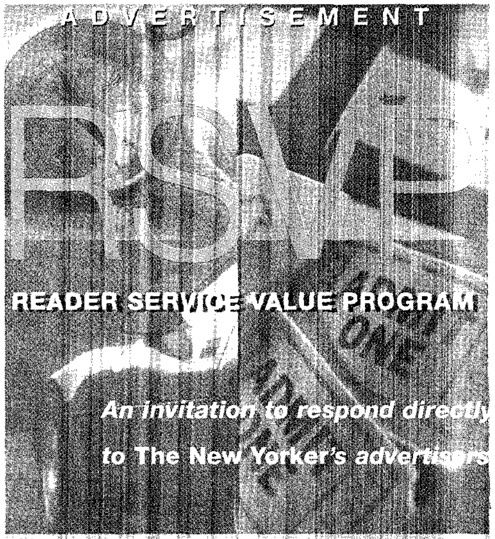
Mrs. Clinton lacks many of her husband's political skills—among them his flexibility, his sense of nuance, and his gift for improvisation. But she shares with him a genius for gestures of empathy. Unlike most people, and even most politicians, she stares unflinchingly into the eyes of those she is meeting, and in the midst of a noisy crowd still seems entirely focussed on whatever they are saying. After she had passed by, I asked several people what their impression of the First Lady had been, and the same words kept cropping up: "honest," "open," "nice," "sincere."

"While you're talking, she's actually listening to what you're saying," Helen Anzalone, a retired teacher, told me. "She doesn't just want to get away."

The first time I met Mrs. Clinton was in August of 1992, at the height of the Presidential campaign and six months after her famous appearance with her husband on "60 Minutes." The Clintons were in the midst of one of their bus tours, winding somewhere through the scrub of east Texas, and I bumped into Mrs. Clinton as I was making my way to the back of the candidate's bus to interview him. She put out her hand, and I remember being struck by the intensity of her gaze, but even more by what she said: "Hi, I'm Hillary Clinton." This seemed to me a pretty good joke on celebrity, and I recall being about to smile but then catching myself. She wasn't, I saw, poking fun at the situation but, rather, insisting on a sort of sublime humility: since she didn't know my name, perhaps I didn't know hers.

There is no inherent contradiction between enormous personal ambition and a genuine commitment to helping others. Indeed, there are probably few public figures who have had a lasting impact in whom these two motives have not both been at work. But the Clintons have never wanted to suggest this about themselves. Instead, they have made the most of the neediness of the electorate, or, if one prefers, its narcissism. From "Putting People First" to the listening tour, the message has always been one of elaborate deference and solicitude. What they saw early on, and with exceptional clarity, is that voters would forgive an awful lot in a politician who could manage to say convincingly that he really cared.

But extending this pretense—that the campaign is all about the voters rather than the candidate—to Mrs. Clinton's current quest pushes its logic to the breaking point. It is a little like robbing Peter to pay Peter, or, as Fabian in "Twelfth Night" observes, "This is to give a dog and in recompense desire my dog again." To run for the Senate after the carnage of the last eight years is nothing if not an extraordinary assertion of self. It makes sense only if the First Lady has an exceptionally strong motive, be it personal or political. Yet this is precisely what she cannot—or will not—provide. ♦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SHOUTS & MURMURS

LOCK 'N' LOWDOWN

BY BRUCE McCALL

OVERHEARD: Charlton Heston to pal Tom Selleck at the recent Fair Play for Russian Roulette fund-raiser: "Guns don't kill people, bullets kill people—and, for that matter, only the teeny little tips at the end." Right on target, Chuck!....

RANDOM RICOCHETS: Speaking of bullets, how come those pasty-faced liberal hysterics *never mention* that the bullet is *as far as a thousand feet away* from the sportsman at the moment of impact? Yet who's always the scapegoat? You got it: the sportsman!....

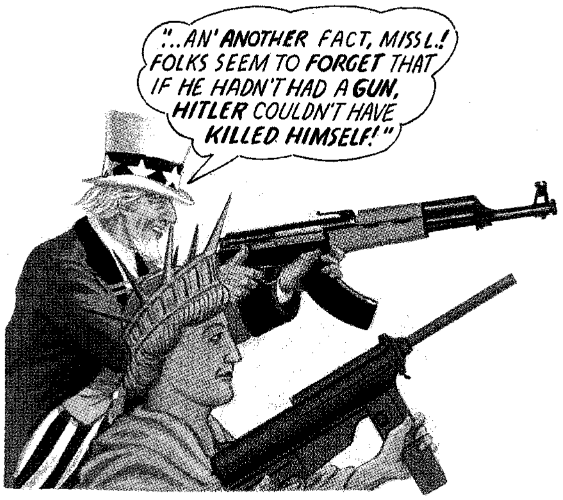
HOWZABOUT THIS FOR A YEAR 2000 PLATFORM PLANK: *Arm All Postal Employees!*... Folks attending that big Save the AK-47 Shoot-In heard Tom Selleck quip to pal Chuck Heston, "God takes lives—guns just take the blame!" Amen and a twenty-one-gun salute, Tom! Meanwhile, the stats show those Fluoridation-Loving Confiscation Vigilantes *wildly overstate* gunplay danger: nine out of every ten gunshots *miss their target.* So all you search-and-seizure fanatics, chill out!!....

SHOT IN THE DARK: Now that the Constitution Sabotage Lobby has made "bullet" a dirty word—howzabout we call it what it is: a high-speed freedom projectile? *When you think about it, aren't gunshots the sound of freedom?*....

HANDGUN CONTROLS? Let's talk piano controls! Dangle a piano out any window, cut the rope—mayhem in our streets. Yet, FACT: Any child can walk into a piano store and buy a Steinway grand without a permit, no questions asked, no waiting period. FACT: Most pianos are owned by liberals. FACT: The fiercest opponents of piano control are—you guessed it—bony-fingered liberal fern-bar quicheheads!....

YOU HEARD IT HERE FIRST: Top docs now admit it—*Guns don't kill people, sucking wounds kill people!*... And why not a pressure campaign against dictionary publishers to suppress those liberal anti-sportsman code words? Examples:

- "gun-shy" would become "lead-intolerant"
- "shotgun wedding" would become "emergency lock-and-load event"
- "bullet-headed" would become "Tapered Skull syndrome"
- "loose cannon" would become "untethered ordnance tube"


"..AN' ANOTHER FACT, MISS L.! FOLKS SEEM TO FORGET THAT IF HE HADN'T HAD A GUN, HITLER COULDN'T HAVE KILLED HIMSELF!"

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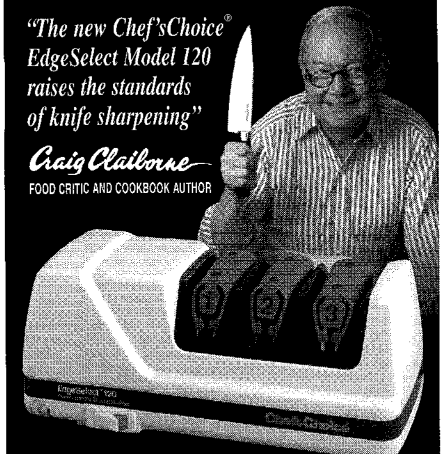

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ANNALS OF MONEY

THE PRICE PROPHET

The long-forgotten economist whose controversial theories help explain today's market mania.

BY JOHN CASSIDY

If there are two things most people can agree on these days, they are that free-market capitalism is the only practical way to organize a modern society and that the key to economic growth is "knowledge." So prevalent are these beliefs that their origins are rarely examined, which is somewhat surprising, since both statements can be traced back, in large part, to one man, Friedrich August von Hayek, a reserved Austrian economist who died in 1992. In November of 1989, when the Berlin Wall came down, Hayek was a frail but mentally alert ninety-year-old living in Freiburg im Breisgau, a picturesque town in the Black Forest. Hayek didn't issue any public statements, but he thoroughly enjoyed watching the television pictures from Berlin, Prague, and Bucharest. "He would beam benignly, and the comment was 'I told you so,'" Hayek's son, Dr. Laurence Hayek, said to me recently from his home in Devon, England.

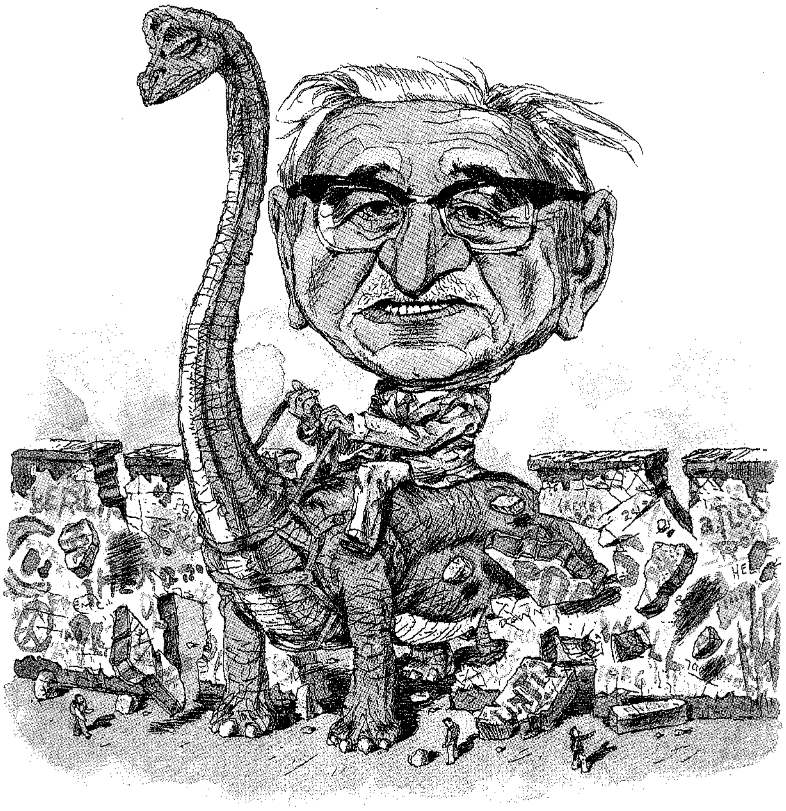
Hayek did indeed tell us so, and at a time when that message was deeply unfashionable. In 1937, in the wake of the Great Depression and with capitalism and democracy under siege from Communism and Fascism, he published an academic article entitled "Economics and Knowledge," which pointed out that free markets were not just a political construct, as many critics claimed, but remained the best way of coördinating scattered information. Seven years later, when most of the world's major economies were under unprecedented central control, Hayek published "The Road to Serfdom," a damning indictment of socialism and state planning that once more, this time in plain English, laid out the fundamental advantage of the free market: by allowing millions of decision-makers to respond individually to freely determined prices, it allocates resources—labor, capital, and human ingenuity—in a manner that can't be mimicked by a central plan, however brilliant the central planner.

This argument is now widely accepted, but when "The Road to Serfdom" was published, Hayek later recalled, "it went so far as to completely discredit me professionally." Many of his colleagues interpreted the book as a dangerous and antediluvian attack on the welfare states that were being built in wartime Britain, where Hayek lived, and in other European countries. The reviews didn't get any better for a long time. During the nineteen-fifties and sixties, the Soviet economy appeared to be doing pretty well, and the social democracies of Western Europe, with their large and growing state sectors, prospered mightily. In 1967, Eric Hobsbawm, a Marxist historian, dismissed Hayek as a "prophet in the wilderness"; in the same year, Anthony Quinton, a British philosopher, dubbed him a "magnificent dinosaur."

If economic history had stopped when the Beatles split up, Hayek would have remained a museum piece favored mainly by right-wing cranks. Even when I began studying economics, at Oxford, during the early eighties, Hayek, with his seemingly outlandish proposals to emasculate the trade unions and privatize the money supply, was still considered well beyond the pale. True, he had received the Nobel Memorial Prize in 1974, but that was seen within the economics profession as a political sop, with Hayek's name added to balance that of his co-winner, Gunnar Myrdal, a left-wing Swedish economist. (Myrdal later said that he wouldn't have accepted the award if he had known he would have to share it with Hayek.) I made it all the way through undergraduate and graduate school without reading Hayek, and I wasn't unusual. Even today, nearly eight years after Hayek's death, there is no scholarly biography available. (The closest thing is a commemorative album produced by John Raybould, a British

Hayek enthusiast.) Most economics textbooks still don't mention him, and his intellectual legacy is often obscured, even by his admirers.

In a forthcoming essay in the *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, for example, János Kornai, the Hungarian economist who holds a chair at Harvard, reports that several decades of comparing capitalism and socialism have convinced him of two things: capitalism is a necessary condition for democracy; and technological development is faster under capitalism, because the system encourages innovation. Kornai mentions Hayek's work in passing, but he doesn't say that Hayek made precisely the same points more than fifty years ago, in "The Road to Serfdom," and amplified them in a series of books during the ensuing forty-five years. Hayek got some things wrong (he was tardy about acknowledging the need for government action to reduce unemployment during the thirties, for example) and neglected others (such as inequality and pollution); but on the biggest issue of all, the vitality of capitalism, he was vindicated to such an extent that it is hardly an exaggeration to refer to the twentieth century as the Hayek century.



Friedrich von Hayek's view of capitalism as a spontaneous information-processing machine was one of the great insights of the century.

JOHN CUNEO

HAYEK wasn't the most brilliant economist of his era (that was probably John von Neumann, the Hungarian mathematical genius who invented game theory), or the most eloquent (John Maynard Keynes, Hayek's sparring partner during the nineteen-thirties, nabbed that title), but he was arguably the most durable. Like Popper, Schrödinger, and Wittgenstein (who was a distant cousin), Hayek was a product of fin-de-siècle Vienna. Critics can claim, with some justification, that his sunny view of capitalism reflected his initial vantage point above the clouds. He was born into an upper-class Austrian family, on May 8, 1899. His father was a medical doctor and a botanist. His mother's family were wealthy civil servants. Raised with two younger brothers, Hayek attended a local *Gymnasium*, where he was forced to repeat a grade. The teachers, he subsequently recalled, "were irritated by the combination of obvious abilities and laziness and lack of interest I showed." At eighteen, he became a cadet officer in a field-artillery regiment on the Italian front. The Great War destroyed the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but when Hayek enrolled at the University of Vienna he was more concerned with the malaria that he had picked up in the Army. After considering psychology, he settled on law and economics, subjects that appeared to offer brighter career prospects. Many of Hayek's fellow-students would gather at the Kaffee Landmann to discuss Marxism and psychoanalysis, but Hayek found these fashionable disciplines "more unsatisfactory the more I studied them."

At this stage, Hayek was mildly socialist. His views changed as he studied under leading members of the pro-free-market Austrian School of economics, including Friedrich von Wieser and Ludwig von Mises. The latter, who in 1922 published a critical book on socialism, combined teaching with running the Abrechnungsamt, a government office established to deal with official debts and other financial issues relating to the Treaty of Saint-Germain. Hayek became von Mises' research assistant, and his mentor's teachings—especially those that dealt with the central importance of entrepreneurship in what von Mises termed the capitalist "discovery process"—remained with him for life. After earning his economics doctorate, in 1923, Hayek spent just over a year in New York, working as a research assistant at N.Y.U., and attending lectures at Columbia, where Wesley Clair Mitchell and John Bates Clark, two of the big names of early-twentieth-century economics, were teachers. The operations of the Federal Reserve, which had been founded in 1913, fascinated economists (just as they do today), and Hayek set out to gather material for a history of the Fed, while also delving into the newfangled statistical techniques that, in the United States, were increasingly being applied to economics.

Although he absorbed the methods used on this side of the Atlantic, Hayek never turned into a recognizably American economist. (His interests were too catholic and philosophical for that.) Upon returning to Vienna, he rejoined von Mises at the Abrechnungsamt. The two great economic issues of the day were inflation and what drives business cycles. On the former, Hayek deferred to von Mises, who, in protomonetarist fashion, argued that the only way to end the hyperinflation that plagued Germany and Austria was to stop the government from printing more money. Business cycles—the tendency for economies to oscillate between booms and recessions—were another matter; neither the Austrian economists, such as

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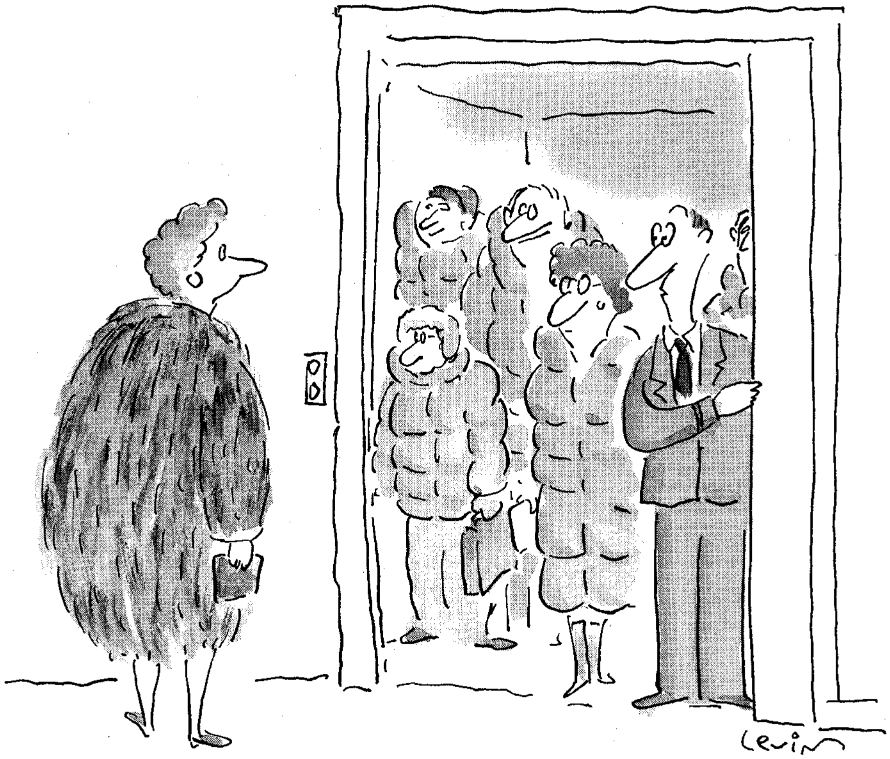
von Mises, nor the American neoclassicists, like Clark, could explain them properly, and this failure was recognized as a gaping hole in economic theory. Hayek set out to fill the gap. His theory, which was eventually expostulated in a 1931 book, "Prices and Production," portrayed economic slumps as the inevitable product of prior booms, during which growth had become "unbalanced," with investment in the expansion of industrial capacity outstripping the supply of savings in the economy; recessions, in this view, were a way of restoring the balance between savings and investment.

Hayek's ideas attracted attention in England, where one of the great economic debates of the century was unfolding. On one side, John Maynard Keynes and his young Cambridge acolytes were developing the theory that economic downturns were caused by a lack of over-all demand in the economy and could be prevented by cutting taxes and increasing public-sector spending. On the other side, figures like Arthur Pigou, at Cambridge, and Lionel Robbins, at the London School of Economics, were defending the traditional view that recessions were "nature's cure," and the only way to forestall them was through wage cuts and government retrenchment. Robbins, who read German, spotted Hayek's work and saw a potential ally against Keynes. He invited Hayek to the L.S.E., first as a guest lecturer and then, in 1932, as a full-time professor. Keynes dismissed Hayek's theory as "one of the most frightful muddles I have ever read"; and for the ensuing five years the cannons pointing north from London and south from Cambridge were rarely silent, with virtually everybody in the British economics profession taking one side or the other. The two primary combatants, however, remained on surprisingly amicable personal terms. "Hayek has been here for the weekend," Keynes wrote to his wife, Lydia, in March, 1933. "I sat by him in hall last night and lunched with him at Piero's today"—Piero Sraffa, a brilliant protégé of Keynes's. "We get on very well in private life. But what rubbish his theory is."

In the end, Keynes won the battle over macroeconomic policy. The intellectual framework he set out in "The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money," which was published in 1936, is still used by central banks and governments the world over to manage their economies. Hayek's work on business cycles, which was written in the obscure terminology of the Austrian School, is rarely referred to these days—although his argument that periods of



"Sorry, Ma'am. Down only."

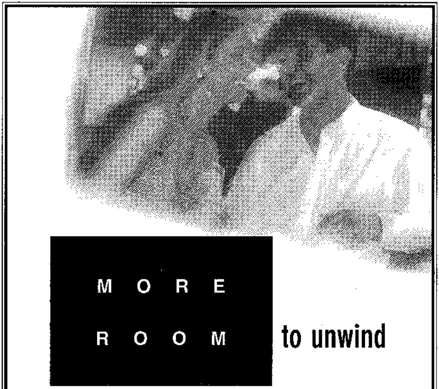
overinvestment tend to end in slumps has never been fully refuted. (Certainly, few inhabitants of Indonesia, South Korea, or Thailand would quibble with it after their experience in the past few years.) Whether Keynes, who died in 1946, won the larger war over the proper role of governments and markets is another question. A less intellectually self-assured man than Hayek might have changed or, at least, questioned his views. Hayek found his isolation increasingly discomforting, but it served only to convince him that the rest of the world was on the wrong track.

A PHOTOGRAPH of Hayek taken in London in 1931 shows an austere figure, much older-looking than his thirty-two years, conservatively dressed in a dark flannel suit, with round glasses, dark hair combed back high on his head, and a neat mustache. Endowed with the fastidious habits and elaborate manners of prewar Vienna, Hayek fell in love with an educated British society that shared many of the same traits. He and his wife, Hella, whom he had met when she worked at the Abrechnungsamt, settled with their two children in Hampstead Garden Suburb. Hayek worked at home in the morning and went to the L.S.E. in the afternoon, often stopping for lunch at the Reform Club, on Pall Mall. The economic-theory seminar that he taught with Lionel Robbins attracted many who later became famous, including John Kenneth Galbraith, John Hicks, and Nicholas Kaldor. Galbraith, who was visiting Cambridge from Harvard, and took the train to London every week to attend, later described Hayek as "one of the gentlest in manner, most scholarly and generally most agreeable men I have known," but added that his seminar was "possibly the most aggressively vocal gathering in all the history of economic instruction."

In 1937, Hayek published "Economics and Knowledge." The paper attracted little public attention at the time, but, in retrospect, it marked the origin of what became Hayek's most lasting contribution to economics: the notion that free markets and free prices are a means of conveying and exploiting information. In any society, the central economic problem is how to best organize production and employ available resources in order to satisfy the needs and desires of millions of different people. Many of Hayek's contemporaries believed that the best way forward was via central planning, which would allow resources to be directed to socially useful areas while avoiding the chronic instability of capitalism. Hayek begged to differ. Centralized systems may look attractive on paper, he argued, but they suffered from a basic and incurable ailment: the "division of knowledge" problem. In order to know where resources should be directed, the central planner needs to know both what goods people want to buy and how they can most cheaply be produced. But this knowledge is held in the minds of individual consumers and businessmen, not in the filing cabinets (or, later, computers) of a government planning agency, and the only practical way for customers and firms to relay this knowledge to each other, Hayek argued, is through a system of market-determined prices.

"We must look at the price system as such a mechanism for communicating information if we want to understand its real function," he wrote in a 1945 paper, "The Use of Knowledge in Society." In a market system, people simply go out and buy the things they like, leaving unwanted goods on the shelves. If they want more of something—say, heating oil—it becomes scarce and its price rises, thereby prompting oil companies to increase production and consumers to economize. If people decide to use less oil, say, because natural gas has become cheaper, the price of oil will fall, and its production will be scaled back—all this taking place without any orders being issued by a government agency. "I am convinced that if it were the result of deliberate human design, and if the people guided by the price changes understood that their decisions have significance far beyond their immediate aim, this mechanism would have been acclaimed as one of the greatest triumphs of the human mind," Hayek wrote.

This view of capitalism as a spontaneous information-processing machine—a "telecommunications system" was how Hayek referred to it—was one of the great insights of the century. It may have been implicit in the work of some previous economists, notably Adam Smith, but Hayek was the first to



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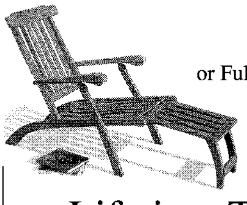

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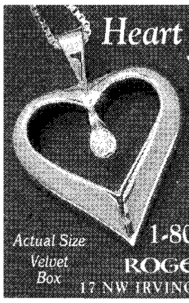

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"Daddy doesn't have a job. Daddy goes to the gym."

spell it out. Even left-wing economists, who regarded capitalism primarily as a system of social exploitation, were eventually forced to concede the acuity of Hayek's analysis, and this resulted in elaborate efforts to construct a viable form of "market socialism," one that would combine common ownership of the means of production with freely determined prices. Hayek, who debated market socialism with the Polish economist Oskar Lange and others during the nineteen-thirties, was always skeptical of these efforts. In a socialist system, prices could not play the same role that they do under capitalism, he argued, because under socialism there would be no competitive firms to react to the prices by innovating and redirecting resources. This point was confirmed in practice, as anybody who had the misfortune to drive an East German Trabant motorcar, or to wear a Romanian suit, the prices of which were supposedly set in the market, would gladly testify.

Since the collapse of Communism, of course, Hayek's arguments have become commonplace. From Mexico to China, the first move of reformist governments has been to privatize state-owned businesses and liberalize prices, usually with positive results. But the validity of Hayek's analysis is by no means confined to the developing world. Here in the United States, we are currently witnessing a textbook case of price changes acting as signals for resources to be reallocated. The prices in question are the stock prices of firms like America Online, eBay, and Yahoo. During the last few years, soaring valuations for Internet companies have prompted investors to finance thousands of would-be imitators, and established firms of all kinds have responded by spending heavily on information technology and E-commerce. This investment has underpinned the economy to such an extent that, according to some calculations, as much as a third of the rapid expansion during recent years can be attributed to spending on high technology.

WHEN the Second World War broke out, the London School of Economics moved to Cambridge, where Keynes secured temporary lodgings for Hayek. Many British economists entered the wartime civil service, but Hayek, who had taken British citizenship in 1938 and supported the Allies wholeheartedly, was excluded because of his background. Despite the snub, Hayek's sojourn in Cambridge "completed the process of thorough absorption in English life which, from the beginning, I had found very easy," he later recalled. It also gave him time to write "The Road to Serfdom."

Unlike Hayek's earlier work, "The Road to Serfdom" was an explicitly populist tract, conceived in response to the growing support among British intellectuals for increased state intervention in the economy. While Hayek was in Cambridge, Sir William Beveridge, a former colleague of his at the L.S.E., published two famous papers—"Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services" and "Full Employment in a Free Society"—that laid the intellectual basis for the postwar welfare state. Beveridge, a member of the Liberal Party, was not an economist ("He knew no economics whatever," Hayek later said tartly), but his reports reflected the impact of both the Keynesian revolution and wartime collectivism. (Hayek always maintained that Nicholas Kaldor, an ally of Keynes, had been the real author of the paper on employment.) To Beveridge, capitalism needed saving from itself with a large dose of government control. Left untended, it had given the world, first, a Great Depression and, ultimately, Fascism.

Hayek never accepted that Fascism was a capitalist phenomenon. To him, Stalin and Hitler were two suits in the same closet, and the closet was marked "collectivism." Hayek dedicated his book "To the Socialists of All Parties." It was directed primarily against "classical Socialism," by which he meant "nationalization of the means of production," but what made it so controversial was the comparisons he drew between Nazi Germany and the way things were heading in the democracies. "Although few people, if anybody, in England would probably be ready to swallow totalitarianism whole, there are few single features which have not yet been advised by somebody or other," Hayek wrote. "Indeed, there is scarcely a leaf out of Hitler's book which somebody or other in England or America has not recommended us to take and use for our own purposes."

In the United States, where opposition to the New Deal and to wartime industrial planning was strong, "The Road to Serfdom" caused a sensation. Henry Hazlitt, the conservative economic commentator, wrote a glowing article in the *Times Book Review*. *The Reader's Digest*, the voice of God-fearing conservatism, rushed out a condensed version, which the Book-of-the-Month Club then published, selling six hundred thousand copies. By the time Hayek arrived in New York, in early 1945, he was something of a celebrity. Years later, he described the reception he received from his publisher:

> "The original plan is off. You have suddenly become famous. You go on a lecture tour of the United States."
>
> "I can't do that. I have never done any public lecturing."
>
> "Well, that's all arranged, you must try and do it."
>
> "When do we begin?"
>
> "Oh, you are late already." It was a Saturday afternoon. "You start tomorrow morning at Town Hall in New York."
>
> Meant nothing to me. What came to mind was this beautiful *New Yorker* cartoon of a woman's club. I thought, Sunday morning, it can only be such a woman's club. When I was picked up at the Regency Hotel and taken downtown, I began to inquire from my chairman, who picked me up, "Well, what sort of audience do you expect?"
>
> "The hall holds three thousand, but there's overflow."
>
> "My God. I have never done such a thing. What am I supposed to lecture on?"
>
> "Oh, we have called the tune, 'Law and International Affairs.' "
>
> "My God, I have never thought about it. I can't do this."
>
> "Everything is announced, they are waiting for you."

To his surprise, Hayek found that he liked public speaking, and he toured the country for five weeks, speaking to packed halls. In retrospect, it is clear that he seriously exaggerated the threat to liberty presented by social democracy of the sort practiced in Western Europe. "We are rapidly abandoning not the views merely of Cobden and Bright, of Adam Smith and Hume, or even of Locke and Milton, but one of the salient characteristics of Western civilization as it has grown from the foundations laid by Christianity and the Greeks and Romans," he wrote in one overheated passage as he argued that "the basic individualism inherited by us from Erasmus and Montaigne, from Cicero and Tacitus, Pericles and Thucydides, is progressively relinquished." This was a strange way to write about compulsory health insurance, state-financed education, and regional development programs—all of which were intended to help people fulfill their individual potential. Alvin Hansen, the dean of American Keynesians, had a point when he wrote in *The New Republic*, "This kind of writing is not scholarship. It is seeing hobgoblins under every bed."

All the same, the context in which Hayek was writing must be recalled. Many of his brightest pupils were socialists or Communists; the true nature of Stalin's regime was not yet commonly known; and capitalism had disgraced itself, for all to see. If the lure of central planning was to be repelled, lectures about the merits of Adam Smith and J. S. Mill would not suffice. The link between collectivism and tyranny would have to be spelled out in language that the man in the corner pub could understand:

> When the government has to decide how many pigs are to be raised or how many buses are to be run, which coal mines are to operate, or at what prices shoes are to be sold, these decisions cannot be deduced from formal principles or settled for long periods in advance. They depend inevitably on the circumstances of the moment, and, in making such decisions, it will always be necessary to balance one against the other the interests of various persons and groups. In the end, somebody's views will have to decide whose interests are more important; and these views must become part of the law of the land, a new distinction of rank which the coercive apparatus of government imposes upon the people.

"Planning leads to dictatorship," Hayek went on, "because dictatorship is the most effective instrument of coercion and the enforcement of ideals and, as such, essential if central planning on a large scale is to be possible." If these passages evoke memories of George Orwell, it is hardly surprising. Orwell reviewed Hayek's book favorably (while pointing out that it ignored the parallel dangers of free-market ideology), and, in many ways, "The Road to Serfdom" was the nonfiction precursor to "Animal Farm," Orwell's 1945 fable about the dangers of collectivism.

WHEN Hayek returned to London, he was an internationally renowned (and, in many quarters, reviled) figure. He would probably have lived out his life in England, but fate intervened. As a young man in Vienna, he had fallen in love with a cousin, Helene Bitterlich. After more than twenty years of marriage, he took up with Helene again, and eventually left Hella and their two children, Laurence and Christine. The subsequent divorce alienated Hayek from many of his friends and colleagues, most of whom took Hella's side. Robbins, Hayek's mentor, hardly spoke to him for years after the split. In 1950, Friedrich and Helene made a clean break and moved to the United States, where the University of Chicago had offered him a

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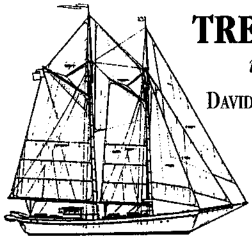

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position, although not one in economics.

Chicago's economics department had refused to accept Hayek, despite his pro-market views. "My understanding is that it was because, at that stage, he really wasn't doing any economics," Milton Friedman, who joined the Chicago faculty in 1946, told me recently. Hayek joined the Committee on Social Thought, which John Nef, an economics historian, had recently set up, attracting over time a host of distinguished figures, including T. S. Eliot, Michael Polanyi, and Hannah Arendt. The new job suited Hayek well. He had little sympathy for the mathematical direction in which economics was going, considering it a futile application of the methods of classical physics to social phenomena that resisted Newtonian mechanics. (Hayek believed that the economy was an innately "complex" and unpredictable beast—a lesson taken up by some economists only in the last decade or so, as they have begun to apply evolutionary models and chaos theory to economics.) Having settled in Chicago, and free from the burden of a heavy teaching schedule, he ranged extensively over political and philosophical questions. His weekly seminar, "The Liberal Tradition"—Hayek always used the word "liberal" in its nineteenth-century sense—covered a panoply of thinkers, from Locke to von Mises.

The seminar formed the basis for "The Constitution of Liberty," published in 1960, which some consider to be Hayek's finest book. (Its fans included Margaret Thatcher, who, during a visit to the Conservative Party's research department in the mid-seventies, slammed a copy of it on the table and declared, "This is what we believe.") Capitalism had proved remarkably effective at raising living standards, Hayek argued, but its success wasn't automatic; it depended on the existence of a generally accepted set of social norms (among them the sanctity of private property), a system of laws reflecting these norms, and a government that enforced the laws fairly, rather than discriminating arbitrarily among individuals. If any of these things were absent, economic development would be stymied. The pertinence of Hayek's analysis has been amply demonstrated since the collapse of Communism. Many Western economists, including most of those who acted as advisers to the post-Communist governments, believed that the collectivist economies could be transformed merely by freeing prices and privatizing state-owned firms. In Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia—where capitalism predated Communism, the rule of law was firmly established, and governments tended to respect private contracts—the optimists were proved, pretty much, right. In the former Soviet Union—where capitalism had never taken deep root, legal contracts were an alien tradition, and official corruption was rampant—the optimists got it horribly wrong. In Russia, for example, prices have been freed and firms have been privately owned for more than five years, but the economy is still only half the size it was before Communism collapsed.

Hayek found the intellectual atmosphere of the Committee on Social Thought congenial, but, despite the fact that American society came closest to the free-market model he espoused, he never grew fond of his new country as a whole, at least not according to his son, Laurence. The reasons for this paradox may have been largely personal. While many immigrants find the informal nature of American life invigorating, Hayek missed the customs of the more rigid societies from whence he came. (Later in his life, he was to remark that the Reform Club was the "only real home" he had known for years.) Every summer, Friedrich and Helene would fly to Paris, where they kept a car, and set off for the Alps, where Hayek would indulge his favorite hobby, mountain climbing. In 1962, he accepted a post at the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität, in Freiburg, a reputable institution associated with Ludwig Erhard, the founder of the West German "social market" economy, though not one on the level of Chicago or the L.S.E. One reason for the relocation was financial—the Freiburg professorship offered a lifelong pension, something his job in Chicago didn't—but Hayek, by now approaching retirement age, was also glad to return to Europe, initially anyway.

Hayek loved the Black Forest scenery, but the move wasn't completely successful. During the late nineteen-sixties, he began to suffer from deep and paralyzing depressions. "We used to talk on the telephone, and I could tell that he was depressed," Laurence told me in recalling these years. "He couldn't summon up any energy to do anything." Hayek himself later attributed his mental problems to low blood sugar, which went undiagnosed by his doctors, but others thought differently. This was the era when faith in the power of government was at its highest, and support for free markets was at its lowest. "He was depressed, I think,

Victoria Roberts

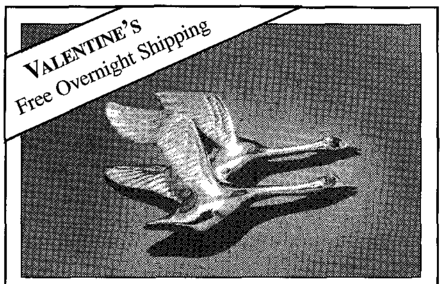
"Grace and polish, all bundled up together in one man?"

mostly because he saw the condition of the world as depressing, and he felt he wasn't receiving the kind of recognition he hoped for," Friedman told me. After Hayek retired, in 1968, he moved to the University of Salzburg, which didn't even have a proper economics department, but which was closer to Vienna, Helene's family home. (The Hayeks returned to Freiburg in 1978.)

Given the intellectual climate of the time, the 1974 Nobel Prize came as a complete surprise to Hayek, and it had a remarkably rejuvenative effect. Suddenly, he found the energy and inspiration to think, write, and travel again. "Some years ago, I tried old age but discovered I didn't like it," he later joked. By the end of the nineteen-seventies, he had produced the three-volume "Law, Legislation, and Liberty," a wide-ranging update of "The Constitution of Liberty." In 1988, at the age of eighty-nine, he published "The Fatal Conceit," an astonishingly erudite book that stressed the evolutionary nature of capitalism. By gradually learning to follow a few rules—honesty, how to exchange goods for money, respect for private property—he maintained, man had "stumbled upon" an extremely effective, though unplanned, method of coördinating human activity. Socialism, Hayek explained, was a futile attempt to overturn the evolutionary process. A year later, as if on cue, Communism collapsed.

DURING his years in intellectual exile, Hayek inspired or founded a network of libertarian groups, including the Mont Pèlerin Society, the Atlas Economic Research Foundation, and the London-based Institute of Economic Affairs. These organizations kept Hayek's ideas in circulation, but they also insured that his legacy was appropriated by the far right. This is unfortunate. Hayek always saw himself as a nineteenth-century Whig, rather than a twentieth-century conservative, and, unlike many of his latter-day "followers," he was by no means antigovernment on principle. He simply reëstablished the Victorian presumption that, unless there are strong and specific arguments to the contrary, the market is usually the most efficient method of providing goods and services. Where the market failed, though, the government should step in, providing defense, public infrastructure, and even a guaranteed minimum income for all citizens. It is quite possible to be a Hayekian and still believe in active government. "All I am arguing about is that, where you can create a competitive condition, you ought to rely upon competition," he insisted during a 1945 radio discussion. These days, everybody from Bill Gates to Jiang Zemin would agree with that statement. One of the main challenges facing modern economists is to detail areas of the economy where Hayek's ideal model of information-sharing doesn't work. Health-insurance providers, for example, have less information about the medical history of potential customers than of their existing customers, so they tend to exclude poor and self-employed people, which creates a need for remedial government action. Similar arguments can be made in the fields of education, retirement planning, and finance.

Aspiring Presidential candidates, Federal Reserve policymakers, and individual investors, too, might consider picking up some of Hayek's long-forgotten papers. (The University of Chicago Press is in the process of publishing what will be a twenty-two-volume set of his collected works.) With the Nasdaq above four thousand, and the economy growing at an annual rate of five per cent or more, the great unanswered question of the moment is whether the correct model to apply is the Hayek of 1937 or of 1931. Does Internet mania reflect a rational price system responding to a revolutionary new technology and unprecedented profit opportunities ("Economics and Knowledge")? Or is the current boom merely the latest example of "unbalanced" growth, destined to end in a slump ("Prices and Production")? Economics, as Hayek would have been the first to admit, is not an exact enough science to provide a definite answer—the balance of evidence points toward the latter explanation—but, whatever happens, we can be sure that capitalism will survive. Whether it will live on in the competitive form Hayek wrote about, or whether it will evolve into a system of "co-opetition," in which a handful of gigantic corporations dominate the information economy, sometimes cohabiting, sometimes warring, is a question for a new century. ♦



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PROFILE

THE LAUGHING GAME

For fifty years, Jerry Lewis kept up the act. Comedy was only part of it.

BY JAMES KAPLAN

The black-and-white glossy taken by a club photographer at Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis's opening night at the Copacabana, in April of 1948, shows a sweaty, ecstatic Lewis, mouth wide open, tux tie undone, his right arm thrown around his partner's shoulder. His left arm is around Frank Sinatra, who had never met Martin and Lewis before that night and had just told the Copacabana audience that the comedy team was headed straight for the top. A few details jump out of the dark background: Lewis's tarnished-looking wedding band, and the brilliant pinkie ring on his right hand; his as yet unfixed teeth; Sinatra's receding hairline; the remote expression on Dean Martin's face, and his unfocussed eyes, blearily gazing into some middle distance.

Lewis saw Martin for the first time in the spring of 1946, at a New York night club called the Havana-Madrid. Martin, né Dino Crocetti, a former welterweight boxer and blackjack dealer from Steubenville, Ohio, was the headliner—a handsome, not especially ambitious crooner, talented enough to have forged a modestly successful night-club career. The club's owner, Angel Lopez, had also booked Lewis as a lip-synching act. Lewis, born Jerome Levitch, in Newark, was the only child of show-business parents. He was twenty years old, six feet tall, a hundred and twenty-seven pounds, and possessed of a maniacal energy. "There was this dance team—they did some kind of Afro-Cuban dance, with a pot of fire on the ground," the comedian Alan King, who also worked the Havana-Madrid that week, told me recently. "And Jerry would come out and interrupt Dean while he was performing. He came out and sat over that pot of fire so his crotch was burning." Martin laughed, and Lewis was smitten. Martin had an effortless kind of glamour; he also had a seductive remoteness. Onstage and off, he developed the Sicilian air of *menefreghismo*—literally, not giving a fuck—to a fine degree.

Some months later, Lewis was doing his act at a club in Atlantic City, on a bill with a singer, when the singer fell ill. He persuaded the club's manager to call Martin, promising that the two could strike some comic sparks. In the dressing room, Lewis conceived the act that would sustain them for ten years. He called it "The Playboy and the Putz": Martin would come across as a smooth, singing Casanova, and Lewis, dressed in an ill-fitting busboy's suit, would heckle him from the audience.

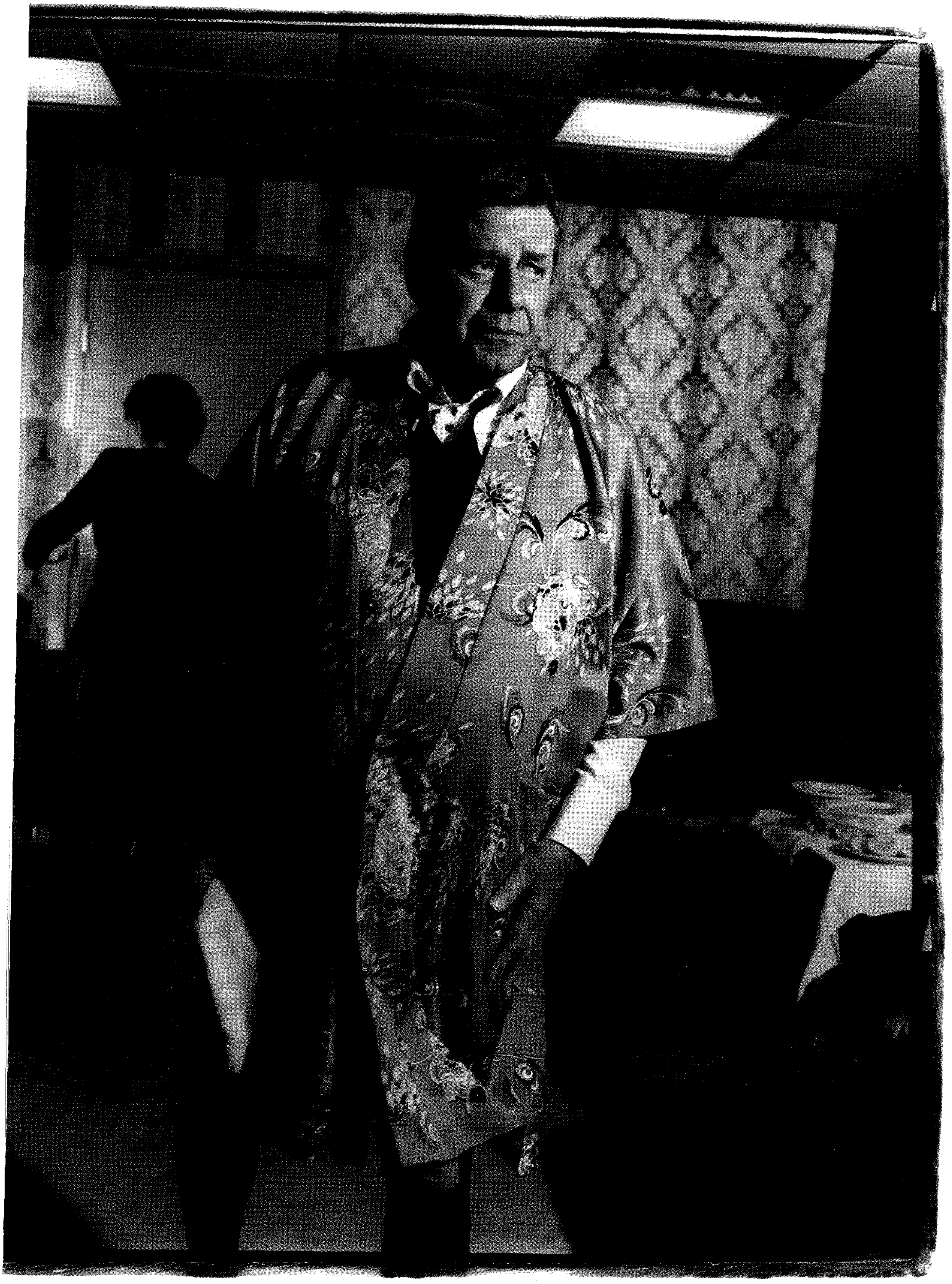
Lewis was like a chimp on Benzedrine, running across tabletops, flinging customers' steaks, snipping neckties with scissors, all the while yowling gibes in the voice of an arrested adolescent. Martin was utterly unperturbed, gazing at the crazed Lewis with the fond indulgence of an understanding older brother. The sparse audience in the two-hundred-and-fifty-seat 500 Club wouldn't let the team get off the stage that night. By the end of the week, there were lines around the block for the 4 A.M. show.

When the act reached the Copacabana, two years later, it had grown more assured—and less inhibited. The Copa was High Church show biz, but Lewis treated the venue, and the clientele, with even less respect than he had given the patrons of the 500 Club. "I have been in the business fifty-five years," Alan King recalled, "and I have never to this day seen an act get more laughs than Martin and Lewis. They didn't get laughs—it was pandemonium." It was

MATRIX

PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVE PYKE

Backstage in January at the Orleans Hotel, in Las Vegas. "I have to protect Jerry Lewis!" the comedian says. "He's nine years old, and I have to live with him!"



"You have to admire his professionalism."

• •

also, as Orson Welles once said to the movie director and writer Peter Bogdanovich, the only moment in their career when they were chic; it was all downhill with the tastemakers after that. When the team appeared on a 1952 telethon hosted by Bob Hope and Bing Crosby, Lewis simply hijacked the show with his unscripted antics, so unnerving Crosby (who was apparently terrified that Lewis would dislodge his toupee) that he walked off the stage and wouldn't come back.

Martin and Lewis's anarchic routines on the "Colgate Comedy Hour" defined the possibilities of early television. Lewis's TV signature lines (yowled in his Kid voice)—"I like it, I like it," "La-a-a-dy!," and "Don't lick it!" (said of a lollipop)—became national catchphrases. It is difficult today to imagine the power and the precise chemistry that Martin and Lewis had together—and how ready postwar America was for the thrilling chaos of this particular act.

Lewis had a genius for physical comedy, and at first his excesses seemed fresh and subversive; but there was something disturbing about his relentless energy, and his ego. In later years, on his movie sets, he might chase a key grip and tickle him, stick cigarettes in his own nostrils for a laugh, blow a take on purpose. A cadre of gofers and yes-men danced constant attendance. Every object on his shoots, down to a sixty-foot boom crane of Lewis's invention (known as Jerry's Toy), was emblazoned with his trademark laughing-boy caricature, like the crest of the Sun King. "There's a certain kind of showbiz ego that goes beyond the regular kind," says Bogdanovich, who became friends with Lewis when he profiled him in *Esquire*, in the early sixties. "It happens with people like Elvis, or Streisand, or Jerry—when you *are* the business. It's perfectly understandable. Talking about yourself and talking about the business are one and the same thing."

AFTER years of being out of fashion, Jerry Lewis has begun to rebound, thanks in part to a renewed interest in physical comedy. The rise of movies as an art form, after all, depended on the skills of the great physical comics—Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd—whose work transcended language and crossed cultural boundaries. By the late sixties, this had become old-fashioned: pratfalls suggested vaudeville and baggy pants. Comedy started heading in a more conceptual and verbal direction, propelled by such standups as Richard Pryor and George Carlin, and continuing through David Letterman and Jerry Seinfeld. But, after three decades of ironic, self-referential comedy, the inevitable reaction has set in, led by Jim Carrey, a remarkable physical comedian who names Jerry Lewis as his greatest influence.

Lewis has also benefitted from an unusual deal he struck in 1958 with Barney Balaban, who was then Paramount's head of production: out of gratitude for the huge amount of money that Lewis's movies were bringing in, Balaban agreed that all rights to the movies would revert to Lewis after thirty years. In 1993, Universal Studios paid Lewis $1.4 million for the rights to remake "The Nutty Professor," with Eddie Murphy. Lewis also received a percentage of the picture's gross profits. The remake, which came out in 1996, earned two hundred and seventy million dollars worldwide, and a sequel is due out in July. More films—and more remakes—are in play. He has sold "The Errand Boy" to Disney, "The Bellboy" to M-G-M, and "Cinderfella" to New Line.

Last September, soon after he had been hospitalized with viral meningitis during a tour of Australia, Lewis once again hosted his annual Labor Day telethon for the Muscular Dystrophy

Association (although, for the first time in the show's fifty years, he was noticeably absent for several of the program's twenty-one and a half hours, to get some sleep). Four days later, he flew to the Venice Film Festival to receive a Golden Lion Award for lifetime achievement. Martin Scorsese, in presenting the award, compared Lewis to Chaplin, Keaton, and Lloyd. In January, Lewis, who had mostly recovered from the meningitis, did his one-man show (shtick, patter, a thirty-piece orchestra) at the Orleans, in Las Vegas, the first time he had played the city in twelve years. This month, he will be the subject of a tribute at the Aspen Comedy Festival.

Recently, I met Jerry Lewis in Las Vegas, where he lives, and saw at once that his energy and ego are scarcely diminished. When I first spotted him, he was waiting for me in the driveway of the Sahara Hotel, behind the wheel of a fire-engine-red Lincoln Navigator. His face had a heavy, almost menacing air. Gold-rimmed aviator glasses over hooded hazel eyes; thick, strong features, with the familiar too-muchness around the mouth and cleft chin—all gave him the look of a serious Vegas character. The impression was enhanced by his outfit: a red shirt unbuttoned halfway (partly revealing a vertical scar from double-bypass surgery), a black-and-gray windbreaker, short brown shorts (which rode up over a black brace wrapped around his right thigh), white socks, and Nike sneakers. In the center of the dashboard was an LCD screen on which "Good Morning America" played. The sun visor above the passenger seat contained another small monitor, and the second row of seats had another, larger monitor and a VCR.

Lewis looked good for a man who's been through sixty-eight years of show business, including the agonizing breakup with Martin, in 1956, and prostate cancer as well as open-heart surgery, not to mention the toll that thousands of pratfalls have taken. He is in constant spinal pain from a tumble he took on "The Andy Williams Show," in 1965, which led to a fifteen-year dependency on Percodan. But he still has that *walk:* going anywhere at all, Lewis appears to be gliding onto a stage, to a standing ovation. His lacquered black hair, now closely trimmed, is just beginning to be flecked with gray. "And I've never had any goddam plastic surgery," he said. "I look the way I do."

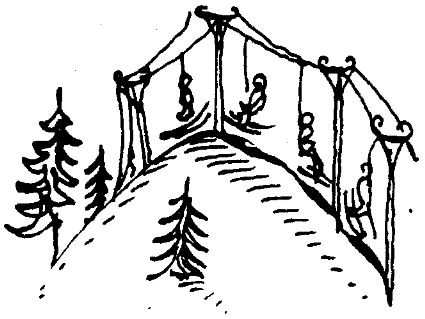
Lewis moved to Las Vegas twenty years ago, he told me, because he hated the traffic in Los Angeles. "I took it very personally," he said. "I'd say, 'There's a million people in cars gettin' out there just to screw me up.' I mean, if I had an appointment at Paramount at ten o'clock, I would have to leave Bel Air at a quarter to eight."

He hasn't directed a movie since "Cracking Up," in 1983, but his contracts for remakes usually stipulate that he will serve as executive producer, with participation in, if not control of, casting and writing. Forty-four weeks of the year, Lewis and his family (his second wife, Sam, née Sandra Pitnick, and his seven-year-old daughter, Danielle, whom he calls "the air in my lungs") are usually home in Las Vegas, where he leads a relatively sedate life, occasionally going to dinner and a movie with old friends.

The eight other weeks are for work: the telethon, which has raised $1.7 billion over half a century; the Australian tour; speaking engagements. For the last four years, along with Dr. Clifford Kuhn, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Louisville, he's been conducting "Laughter and Healing" seminars, giving lectures on humor and life to bedside-manner-challenged physicians, at various hospitals around the country.

He is prone to referring to himself in the third person and to talking in superlatives and circus-poster capital letters. The subject is not infrequently himself. "I don't give a shit if people think I have a fantastic ego," Lewis told me. "I earned it! I worked my heart out! And you know what? I'm as good as they get."

LEWIS'S house, ten thousand square feet of red pile carpeting and mirrors, contains a fully equipped film-and-video-editing facility, plus one or two television sets in almost every room, all of them usually turned on, with the sound off, to MSNBC or CNN or Fox News. From the outside, the house is a solid-looking red brick structure with a three-car garage, set on a flat acre in the middle of an old Las Vegas residential neighborhood, called the Scotch Eighties. The mega-hotels and their art galleries, theme parks, and casinos are just blocks away. Less than half a mile from Lewis's back yard (which includes a playhouse the size of a small condo for Danielle, plus a swimming pool with an artificial mountain, water slide, and waterfall), the truck traffic on Interstate 15 roars by steadily. After Lewis and I drove up, he opened the door (a mezuzah is mounted on the lintel) and called, in that voice, the screechy voice of the Kid, "Hell-loww?"



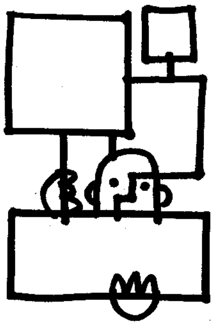
A pair of shih tzus came snuffling across the carpet. "Hello, my darlings," Lewis said. "Daddy's home." He scooped up one of them, and walked through the dining room (neo-Parisian Vegas oil landscapes on the walls) and into a huge kitchen (a large oil painting of Lewis performing his act for an audience of two). Nobody was home. From there we went through the den, past a big glass memento case, and into a fluorescent-lit office.

The office was lined with books, scripts, videotapes, statuettes, and sports equipment. His desk was crowded with telephones, tape recorders, clown statues, and cups filled with collections of identical pens and markers and screwdrivers (when he likes a product, he buys in quantity). There were dozens of eight-by-ten photographs: Martin and Lewis with Sinatra; Martin and Lewis with Marilyn Monroe; Lewis with Chaplin; Lewis with John F. Kennedy. As a boy, Lewis entertained Franklin Roosevelt at the White House. He appeared with Albert Einstein, in Princeton, on an early television hookup.

"Listen to what they said when we played the Copacabana," Lewis said, and recited from memory a review from 1948: "Jerry Lewis walks onstage, does a couple of gags, it's funny. Dean comes out, sings a couple of numbers, but it doesn't mean anything until the Kid comes out again. The Kid comes out, and the Kid brings an energy, and the Kid is insane, and he's like a monkey on a stick—he's hysterical."

He gave me a look. "And everything

that I'm doing is off Dean. Every move I make is because he went 'Ah, ah.' No one understood what 'Ah, ah' did. It stops the body of a wildcat. This man watched me *breathe*. He knew when to lay back. He *never once* in ten years got in the way. He was so *impeccable* at what he did that I didn't even know it until I started to review the old material twenty-five years later. That's when I realized the depth and the dimension of his *natural-born talent*."



There is something oppressive about Lewis's protectiveness toward his ex-partner, who died in 1995; it has the feeling of powerful, unresolved emotions. Martin possessed not only effortless magnetism but a comic brilliance, which, filtered through his reserve, made him one of the most talented straight men of all time. "Dean was more cerebral," said Shirley MacLaine, who met Martin and Lewis when she co-starred in their 1955 film "Artists and Models." "He was the master of the throwaway line—he would say things under his breath that were so funny. But he didn't want to seem funnier than Jerry. Dean was very shy and self-conscious about his lack of education. Jerry tended to deal with that in a more verbose way—he was the scientist of comedy."

There had been many great comedy duos in the past: Smith and Dale, Olsen and Johnson, Laurel and Hardy, Abbott and Costello. Yet the team closest in spirit to Martin and Lewis may have been Burns and Allen—in both cases, the straight man's unwavering onstage affection for his off-the-wall partner created a similar feeling in the audience, no matter how wild or lame the joke.

"We were working together, and Dean's like this." Lewis mimed standing nose to nose with Martin. "And he said, 'I have finally come to the point in our relationship where I am going to have to tell you, If you do that again it's over. Do you understand that?' And I would put my mouth on his mouth"—Lewis made a big wet-kiss sound—"and say, 'I understand *perfectly*.'

"And he wouldn't budge. The first time that happened, he was so fucking good. You do that to anyone, and they will blanch; they'll kill the gag. But we left it in the act! It was wonderful! It was so irreverent. Because his yelling at Jerry, the Kid, put the audience in a strange place for a moment. That reprimand! And the very women that thought he was handsome, they'd go up to the hotel with me, because he yelled at me.

"Listen to this," Lewis went on. "We're standing on the stage of the Paramount Theatre—1950. Dean says to me, 'Did you take a bath this morning?' And I said, 'Why? Is there one missing?' And five thousand people in the Paramount Theatre are banging the chairs, hysterical. And we come upstairs after that show, and I said, 'Dean, do you know that we're making a half a million dollars a week with that fuckin' terrible joke?' And he looked at me and he said, 'No no no no. We're makin' a half-million dollars a week 'cause people love to see two men who love one another work together, and be together, and aspire.' "

It is somewhat difficult to imagine these precise words coming from the mouth of Dean Martin. Did the two men really love each other? "I was the only one that he let in," Lewis insisted. "He'd love to hug Frank when Frank came to the dressing room. He can't. He can with me, but he can't with Frank."

Still, others—Alan King, for example—don't remember the two men being affectionate offstage. This despite (or because of) ten years together playing best friends, in night clubs, on TV, and in sixteen movies, from "My Friend Irma," in 1949, through "The Caddy" (1953) and the film that many consider the pinnacle of their partnership, "Living It Up," a 1954 remake of the Carole Lombard comedy "Nothing Sacred," with Lewis in the Lombard role. According to Shawn Levy's 1996 biography of Lewis, "King of Comedy," and Nick Tosches's 1993 book "Dino," just weeks before their breakup, as the team worked on their final picture together ("Hollywood or Bust," in 1956), Martin looked Lewis in the eye and said, "You're nothing to me but a fucking dollar sign."

Lewis confirmed the story. He pulled a Kleenex out of a box, then another. Three, four, five. He put them all together and blew his nose loudly. He peered through the aviator glasses. "Dean was hurting, as I was, that it was coming to the end," he said. "He needed to lash out, because I didn't fix it and make it all better again. Dean and I had a great understanding. It was: I'll go to the office, I'll make the bookings, I'll do the business, I will write, you will approve. And all the time that I'm doing all this stuff he was playing golf!"

Martin was famous for never doing a jot more work than he had to, while Lewis, for the decade that they were together, set about learning the ins and outs of every job on the set. He was helping the directors direct. He was helping the screenwriters write scripts that gave Martin less to do. "Jerry is a brilliant control freak," Shirley MacLaine said. "He controlled everything. I think Dean felt like an also-ran—I don't think he felt he was getting enough credit for the comedy."

I asked Lewis if his ego had been out of control. He said, "Maybe. See, that's what's called 'God's compensator.' When you're so frightened you have no ego, but you build one that gets out of control. I mean, who was going to accept me without Dean? What was I going to do? I was funny because he was making me funny. Terrible fear. I was thirty years old, for crissakes, when it was over! I didn't know that we wouldn't see one another for twenty years! He was my hero, my big brother, my dad, the man I loved more than anyone in the world."

But what was Lewis to Martin? On a 1976 telethon, Sinatra told Lewis, "Listen, I have a friend who loves what you do every year and who just wanted to come out."

The friend was Dean Martin. He came out—tan and craggy, still handsome at fifty-nine—and embraced his former partner, who looked close to tears. Martin kissed Lewis on the cheek. They held their hug, staring into each other's eyes.

"All right, all right," Sinatra barked. "Break it up. What is this here?" The audience was going wild.

"You know, it sort of seems like we haven't seen each other in twenty years," Martin told Lewis, in his boozy pseudo-Southern accent.

"Well, there were all these rumors about our breaking up, and then, when I started the show and you weren't here, I believed them," Lewis said.

Lewis recalled that, as Martin sang a number with Sinatra, he fantasized about starting a friendship with his ex-partner again. But the gulf was too wide. After the breakup, each man had ended up succeeding in his own right. Martin had established himself as a movie actor (with "The Young Lions" and "Some Came Running," both released in 1958). He built a career as a night-club performer and recording artist. He helped found the Rat Pack. And in 1965 he started a smash TV variety show (it ran until 1974), precisely as Lewis's career was disintegrating.

Lewis, of course, became a movie titan. His first solo film, "The Delicate Delinquent," was a worldwide smash, earning six million dollars, a huge amount for 1957. Most of his movies performed similarly well: even as critics dismissed such films as "The Sad Sack" and "Don't Give Up the Ship," the public kept buying tickets. He learned the art of directing from the great Frank Tashlin, who made two Martin-and-Lewis pictures and six with Lewis alone. The first film Lewis directed himself was "The Bellboy" (1960), which he wrote in a week and shot in under a month, on a budget of nine hundred thousand dollars. The picture went on to gross some fifty million dollars, according to Lewis. Years later, Charlie Chaplin asked Lewis for a print, citing the film as his best—an honor most critics accord to "The Nutty Professor" (1963).

In this period, Lewis even recorded an album. One cut, "Rock-a-Bye," an old Jolson number, sold 1.4 million copies, more than any of Martin's hits. The press liked to bait each man about the other, and neither was averse to rising to the bait. After the telethon reunion, Lewis complained to reporters that Martin had been drunk onstage. In fact, Lewis was so high on Percodan that he had to be reminded the next day that he and Martin had been on TV together. "The blank years are the scariest part," Lewis told me. "I still sneak into the editing room to look at that telethon. And I see these wide eyes, a guy strung out with thirteen Percodan in him who's on the air, and I don't believe it."

We returned to the Navigator and headed off into the jumble of Vegas. Lewis pushed a button, and the monitor changed from broadcast TV to a three-color street map of the city, on which the vehicle's current position, tracked by a geosynchronous communications satellite, was represented by a moving blue dot. "I just change the chips, and I can get a map of anywhere," he said, his unregenerate Jersey accent gliding over the last word's final "r." He has always been a passionate technophile. I asked what this chip's range was. "All the way to L.A.," Lewis said.

Lewis lived in Los Angeles for more than thirty years after he left Newark. In 1958, he moved his wife, Patti Palmer, and their four sons into a Bel Air mansion—thirty-three rooms, seventeen bathrooms, three kitchens, two tennis courts—formerly owned by Louis B. Mayer. Lewis's filmmaking career peaked in the early sixties, and by 1965, the year after the Beatles came to America, the kind of old-fashioned grownup entertainment that had epitomized Las Vegas for two decades was on the decline. Mel Torme considered going to work as an airline pilot. Frank Sinatra griped about "the pukes," as young people were sometimes referred to then, and said, "Rock and roll has three notes—two of them wrong." Jerry Lewis began the siege amiably enough by clowning his way through a duet of the Beatles' "Help!" with his singer son, Gary, on the TV show "Hullabaloo," in 1965. But even as Lewis was performing this act of condescension, Gary Lewis and the Playboys—whose hit single "This Diamond Ring" had reached No. 1 earlier that year—had more currency in the business than the lead singer's father.

In 1973, with his career and his nearly thirty-year marriage sputtering, Lewis, in a Percodan haze, locked himself in a bathroom and, according to Shawn Levy, put the muzzle of a .38 revolver in his mouth. The pistol was cocked when he heard a couple of his sons running and laughing in the hall outside. He put the gun away. "You get to a point where you're so humiliated that your brains are scrambled," he said. "But I do remember that day, boy, because it frightened me so."

On a trip to Houston after the 1978 telethon, Lewis collapsed, from what was first thought to be a heart attack. He turned out to have a fist-size bleeding ulcer, the symptoms of which had been masked by the Percodan. Lewis's doctor told him he had to get clean or die.

When he moved to Las Vegas,

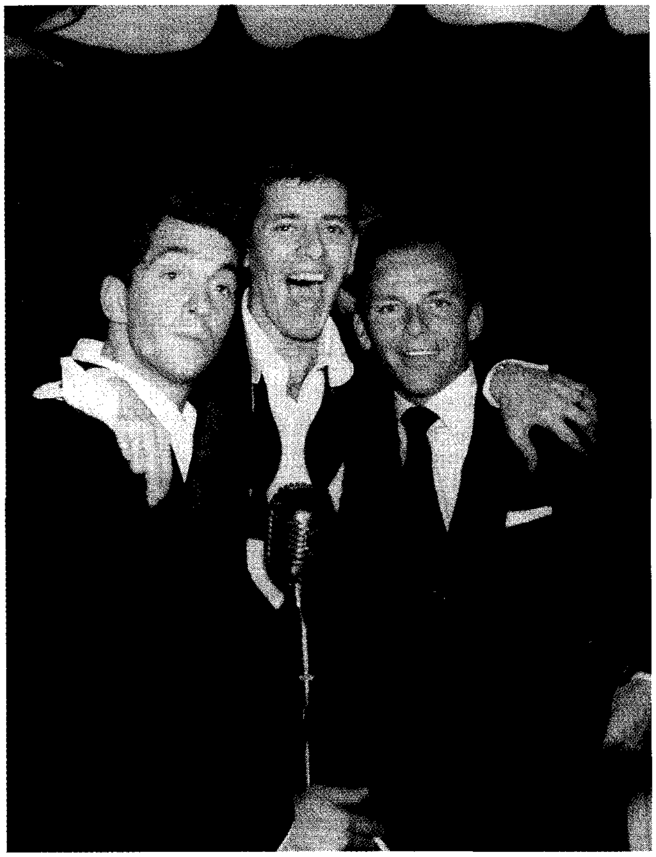
"It's your grandparents, claiming their visitation rights."

Lewis was in the midst of a lawsuit served by the owners of the failed Jerry Lewis Cinema chain, which led him to Chapter XI bankruptcy. Not long before, while he was in Florida making a picture called "Hardly Working," Lewis had met Sandra Pitnick, a twenty-nine-year-old dancer. At the time, Lewis was separated from Patti. After "Hardly Working" wrapped, Lewis and Pitnick moved to a place of their own, in a town that had always been kind to him.

WHEN we returned to his office, Lewis handed me a ten-page memo, addressed to me, on Jerry Lewis Films Inc. stationery, entitled "Notions JL has had for 5 decades." It was a list of talking points for our interviews, a hundred items in all, ranging from "1. DEAN MARTIN ONLY!!!!!," "2. THE MOB," and "3. SINATRA," to "12. HARRY COHN / SAMMY," to "18. JOHN KENNEDY (OVAL OFFICE)," to "26. THE NRA HAS GONE BACKWARDS 40 YEARS WITH CHARLTON HESTON THE POSTER BOY FOR INANE SNOBBERY," to "32. JL FILMS HAVE GROSSED OVER 2 BILLION DOLLARS (MOSTLY WHEN TICKETS WERE 25¢)," to "48. AUSTRALIA!!!!!!!!!!!!!," to "67. 49 TELETHONS AND NO CUE CARDS MEANS JL HAS TALKED FOR ABOUT 800 HOURS FROM HIS GUT. (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF CARDS THAT CONTAIN VITAL INFORMATION SCIENTIFICALLY THAT I MUST NOT OOPS WITH)," to "81. V.P. AGNEW CALLED JL TO DO ONE MAN SHOW AT THE WHITE HOUSE (THIS ONE IS A BEAUTY!!!)," to "99. VIDEO PIRATES ($$$$$$$$$$$$$$)," and "100. MAKING MY MOVIES AGAIN."

It was a list of such Whitmanesque proportions that I was temporarily halted in my tracks. I recalled an admiring remark he had made about Sinatra's decision, at a certain point in his career, to stop talking to the press. Why didn't he stop? "I am too good a showman," he said, "and too smart a businessman not to do to the press what they did to me. And that was use them. But the press is not the problem; I'm the problem. I need to understand that I have all of my life been a target, because I have a *point of view*. I have a hundred and seventy-*four* I.Q. I am a *very bright* young man! And I really need to say what I have to say!"

He stared at me for a moment and then started to defend himself against everyone who had ever written him off. "Now, here's what Hollywood fears and hates: multifacetedness. You see, they don't particularly care that you write and produce and direct and act. What they care about is that by your doing all that you punctuate how singularly faceted *they* are."



Martin, Lewis, and Sinatra at the Copacabana in 1948. "He was my hero, my big brother, my dad, the man I loved more than anyone in the world," Lewis says of Martin.

Lewis often seems to conflate all his detractors into a big anti-Jerry conspiracy. His paranoia can be as heated as his self-regard, and he has alienated many friends and colleagues along the way. He has written off his youngest son, Joseph, who is thirty-six ("He's in Forest Lawn," Lewis has said. "I buried him"), because he accepted twenty-five thousand dollars in 1989 from the *National Enquirer* for an exposé that detailed Lewis's drug-taking, womanizing, and corporal punishment of his children.

He has no patience for people who criticize the telethon, although the broadcast seems to make almost everybody uncomfortable except Lewis, the Muscular Dystrophy Association itself, and thousands of sufferers from neuromuscular disease. It is, of course, show business at its kitschiest and most mawkish, and generations of clever people have delighted in ridiculing it. Yet even the telethon may be becoming respectable again. Last year, the critic Tom Shales wrote an admiring piece in the Washington *Post* calling the annual Labor Day event a last refuge of vaudeville for our "postmodern or post-ironic" age. He wrote, "Even in desperation it takes on a kind of elegance, or at least a kind of poignancy."

Lewis has always been at ease with schmaltz. His solo movies are filled with unabashed sentimentality, of the sort that Chaplin was allowed to get away with and remain sacrosanct. (Then again, Chaplin never hosted a telethon.) Also unfashionably, Lewis has a deep affinity for clowns.

The acme of his clown fixation is an unreleased 1972 film, "The Day the Clown Cried," in which Lewis, directing himself, played a circus clown forced by the guards of a Nazi death camp to beguile children into the gas chambers. Lewis-watchers have turned this lost work into something of a fetish. One evening last spring, when Lewis was speaking at the Actors Studio in Manhattan, a student asked him whether, in the wake of Roberto Benigni's Holocaust film "Life Is Beautiful," he might finally be ready to show "The Day the Clown Cried" to the world. Lewis's face hardened. "It's an incomplete work," he said, flatly. "It will never be seen, I'm sorry to say. Even if I were to make the five final scenes necessary, I could never match it. It's gone. It's just unfortunate. It's like losing a child, but you must go on."

When I asked him about this later, he was still touchy. He also contradicted himself. "The photography is shot," he said. "There is only postproduction that needs to be done." The film was a French-Swedish coproduction, and today, according to Lewis, it lies in a

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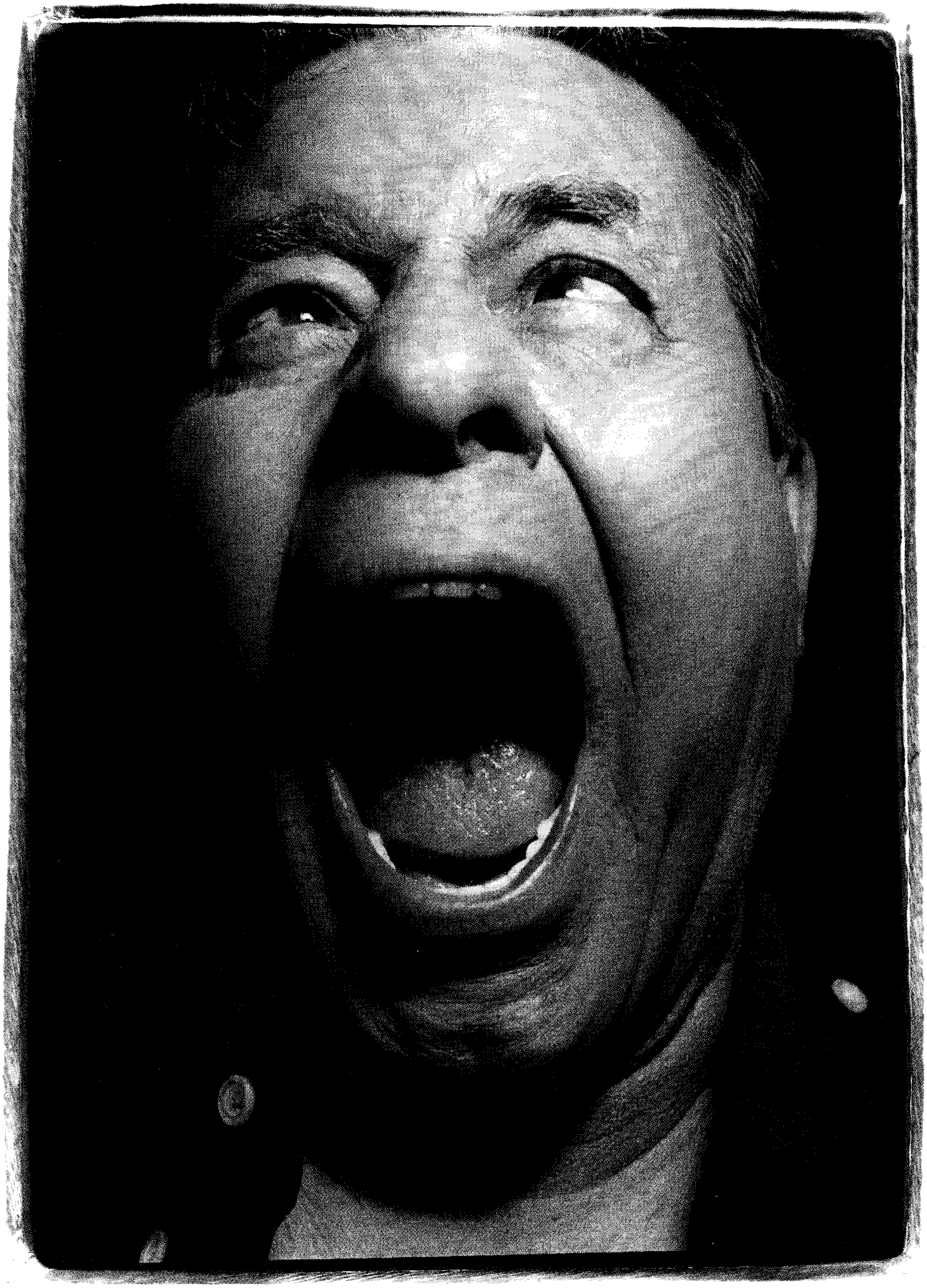


vault in Stockholm, the prisoner of some imbroglio between the two countries. “It’s restrained,” Lewis said vaguely.

The film’s original writers were apparently horrified that Lewis had turned their story about a malevolent, failed circus clown, a Gentile sent to Auschwitz for mocking the Führer, into the story of a charming and brilliant clown sent to Auschwitz for being Jewish. There are several long sequences in the film where Lewis performs virtuoso clown routines in mime for the incarcerated children.

Lewis himself thinks the picture is a lost masterpiece, and he keeps a rough cut of it in his office. “It was so fuckin’ good,” he told me. “And Jerry was *funny* in it. His need to be funny made him funnier. He was wonderful with the children. And his performances to keep the children happy were magical performances. There’s three or four situations like that where he is really as good as I’ve ever seen him.”

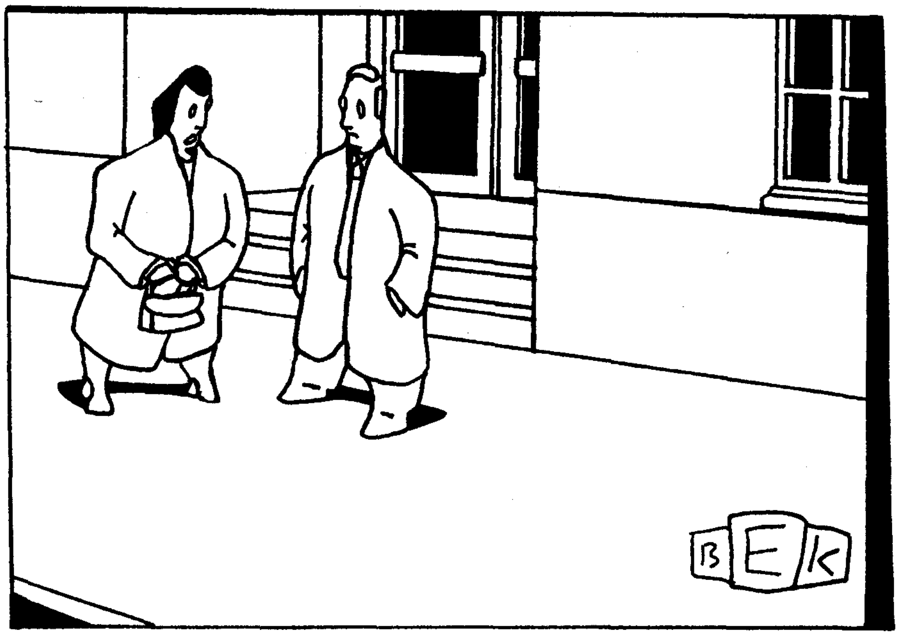
Others view the film differently. Harry Shearer, a writer and actor who was shown the rough cut by a friend, the director of Lewis’s telethon, told the magazine *Spy* in 1992, “The closest I can come to describing the effect is if you flew down to Tijuana and suddenly saw a painting on black velvet of Auschwitz. You’d just think, My God, wait a minute! It’s not funny, and it’s not good, and somebody’s trying too hard in the wrong way to convey this strongly held feeling.”

The view that Lewis tries too hard in the wrong way is common among his detractors. “Certain comedians just need it too badly,” a well-known comic told me. “That’s their strength, but at a certain point it becomes a weakness. It’s a Jerry Lewis and a Robin Williams type of thing, a Jim Carrey type of thing if he’s not careful.”

LEWIS’S admirers, such as Conan O’Brien, see him as a large and important figure. “When I was at the *Harvard Lampoon*, it was very chic to make fun of how the French loved Jerry Lewis, which is the kind of thing that seems funny when you’re twenty and a young comedy hot shot,“ O’Brien said. “When you’re thirty-five and you’ve really done your homework, you start to realize, Oh my God, this guy did a lot—he made these huge hit movies, he invented the video assist. Who am I to make fun? ”

Lewis was a filmmaker with many talents at a time when there were few auteurs in American cinema. (He created the video assist in 1960, on “The Bellboy”: it enables a director to watch a take on a miniature monitor as it is being filmed. The technology is used on virtually every film made today.) In the early seventies, Lewis taught a film course at the University of Southern California which was attended by the future directors George Lucas and Randal Kleiser.

“Everyone in the class was amazed to find how serious he was about filmmaking,” Kleiser told me. “He taught me a lot of things I still use to this day. First, never shoot a woman with a lens below her chin. Also, when you’re setting up a shot, looking into the lens, always think of three shots—the one you’re doing then, the one you did just before, and the one you’re about to do next.”



“Do you want to see where I fester?”

Filmmakers’ respect for Lewis has always been less fickle than the general public’s. Woody Allen tried to hire him to direct his first movie, “Take the Money and Run,” in 1969. Martin Scorsese’s take on Lewis in “King of Comedy” (1983), which was, to a great degree, Lewis’s take on himself, was definitive. Lewis’s Jerry Langford—infinitely jaded, witheringly caustic, and agonizingly alone—was like the Jerry Lewis character as reconfigured by David Rabe or Harold Pinter. “Jesus Christ Almighty,” Lewis said recently about his notices for “King of Comedy.” “They finally wrote great about me, and I didn’t do anything! I played myself.”

He had, arguably, done it once before. “The Nutty Professor” was a Jekyll-and-Hyde tale about a nerd named Julius Kelp and his alter ego, the slick, detestably egomaniacal lounge singer Buddy Love. Kelp, Lewis has always maintained, was based on a gawky character he once encountered on a train. Lewis was fascinated by the man’s unworldliness, which reminded him of his own innocence before he became famous.

But what about Buddy? It has been suggested that Lewis based Love on Dean Martin, but that assessment is too superficial. Martin was certainly sleek, but he was weirdly devoid of ego. A more plausible model for Buddy Love is Lewis himself, as he was in the early sixties—the Sun King of the Paramount lot.

“Yes,” Lewis said to this suggestion. “I’m *it!* I took it from me! I don’t ever want you to see that in me. Jesus fuckin’ Christ, what a *prick!* But the funniest part about it was that the mail we got—women loved him! And I was angered by it. You *loved* him? In my whole career, it was the only Stanislavski method that I think I ever participated in.”

Stella Stevens, who portrayed Julius/Buddy’s love interest in the movie, remembers shooting the wrenching final scene, in which Buddy gets up to sing at the college prom and turns back into Julius. She said, “Jerry was in his dressing room and wouldn’t come out.” He had been weeping. Stevens recalled, “It was powerful writing—I’m sure he saw both sides of himself in those two characters.”

Lewis’s film came out of an internal struggle. By comparison, the remake, in which Eddie Murphy played the Julius Kelp character as a fat man, was primarily a visual joke. When I asked Lewis about the Eddie Murphy film, he spoke carefully: “I thought Eddie was wonderful. Eddie just has so much talent. I didn’t agree with some of the things they did—naturally, because it’s my baby. But I thought Eddie was terrific.” A small smile. “And it was my financial pleasure for him to be terrific.”

But what about that farting sequence? Lewis made a face. “Unnecessary,” he said. “It’s pushing. It’s forcing. When comics get in trouble, they go to the toilet.”

Lewis now spoke of other comics. “I think that Jim Carrey is the best physical comedian to have come down the pike in a hundred years,” Lewis said. “But they’re not letting him breathe. They’re digitizing all of his good stuff. ‘The Mask’ was wonderful. But he didn’t *need* all those special effects. He’s good by *himself*.”

I asked him what he thought of Adam Sandler. “Never saw him. But you wanna talk about Robin Williams? Now you’re talkin’ about somebody. He is the future of all comedy, thank God. And Billy”—Crystal—“is brilliant. Billy, with the right material, no one is better than Billy—except Robin.”

He was less than sanguine about the state of comedy in general. “Here’s what’s happening today,” he said. “Young comics who work in these standup joints, what they’re doing is cerebral combat. They’re defying the audience—‘Let’s see if you know what this word means.’ Or then they have to get a little grubby and vulgar. And what I can’t get them to understand is that people don’t go to this club to *hear* you. They go to *see* you. Put some physicality in the joke. Move on the stage.

“I’ve shown this to kids in these clubs. Give me any joke! ‘Well, this man goes into the movie and the line into the men’s room is something awful, and he doesn’t know what to do.’ ” Lewis stood up, contorting his body. “ ‘Oh, Jee-sus,’ ” he whimpered as the man, and then noted, “We’re telling the joke, but we’re moving our fuckin’ body.”

What about Jerry Seinfeld? “Jerry could be so much more,” Lewis said. “But, see, what happens with an awful lot of young guys that get this kind of celebrity status and this kind of money, what they do is take themselves a little seriously. I think that Jerry is wonderful. But Jesus, look in the mirror and say, ‘I am not Cary Grant. I’m this kid that made a fortune.’

“Comedy in 1920 with the Keystone Cops had one ingredient that no one today takes into consideration—and that is silliness,” Lewis went on. “Mischief. The woman is walking down the street, O.K.? She’s got a huge package of groceries, and she’s a very obese lady. The cop is standing here, and as she walks by him he makes a turn so he kicks her right in the ass. Well, that’s so fuckin’ mischievous! Her bag broke, the groceries went. See, today you’d have writers at Disney saying, ‘Why would the cop kick her in the ass?’ Who *gives* a shit? Did you hear the laugh it got?”

An elfin-faced woman in shorts appeared in the doorway of the office—slim, tan, curly-haired, attractive in a non-show-biz way. “Hello,” she said.

“This is Sam!” Lewis said.

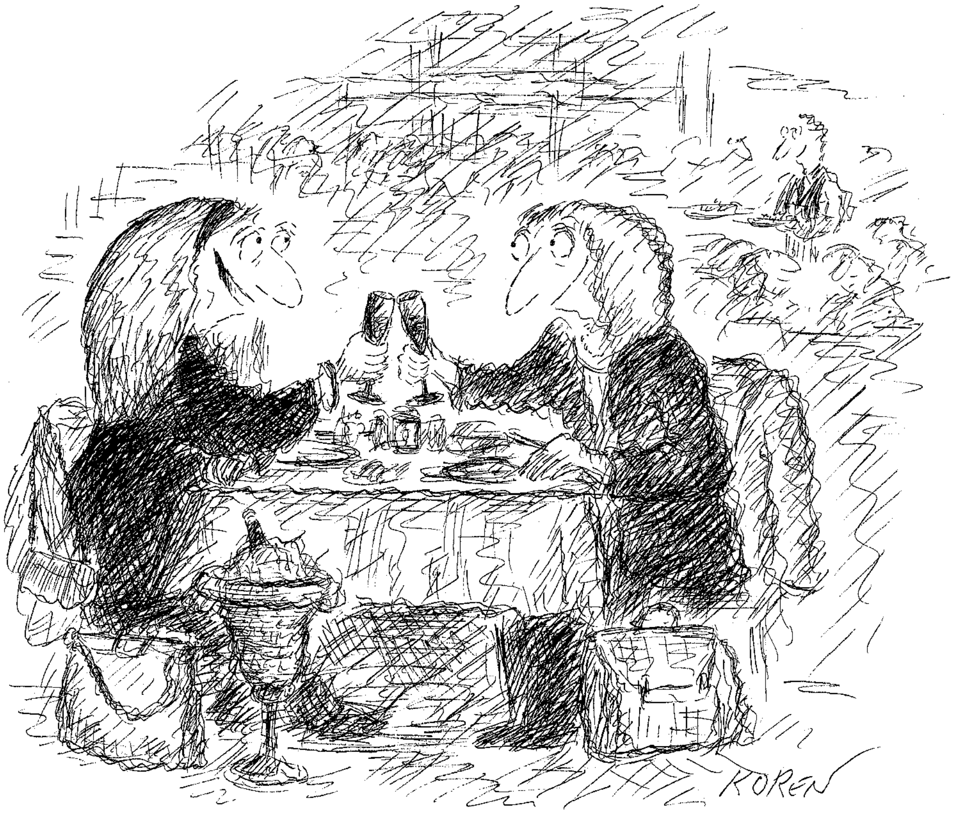
He kissed her and asked about her physical-therapy session—an old knee injury from her dancing days had been flaring up. “How’d you do, Boo Boo?” he asked. “How is my daughter?”

“She’s fine,” Sam said. “We worked on her spelling words.”

Sam asked if there was anything we needed, then left as quietly as she came in.

“Now, that’s why for twenty solid years I’ve never looked at another female,” Lewis said. “I just don’t. A girl could walk by with everything hanging out. It doesn’t get my attention.”

It was not always thus. Fifty years earlier, when Martin and Lewis were the most popular entertainers in the world, “I was like a kid in the candy store,” Lewis said. “I mean, it was nothing for me to knock off four broads in an afternoon. We’d go by the numbers. ‘Twenty-three-A for Mr. Lewis, please!’ ‘No! Twenty-four-A is the blonde; twenty-three-A is the brunette.’ Jesus Christ, I could tell you . . . Uh-ha-o-ho! It was just wonderful! The thing that was not wonderful about it was that there was



“To our divorces—powerful tools of capital formation.”

Wm Hamilton

"Could we be getting a little too museum-quality?"

• •

no morality. I had no morality. I'm married. So what? I'm telling it to you exactly like it was. I had no guilt. I thought, This is what men do."

IN November, Jerry Lewis, along with Dr. Clifford Kuhn, travelled to Dallas to do one of his "Laughter and Healing" evenings. He was still recovering from the meningitis, which had dogged him throughout a very busy fall.

I found Dr. Kuhn, a bald, wry-looking man in a sedate blazer and a Looney Tunes tie, in the lobby of Lewis's hotel. He first met Lewis four years ago, he told me, when he wrote a letter to the comedian, who was playing in the show "Damn Yankees" in Louisville, about his own work with laughter and healing: as part of Kuhn's research, he had performed as a standup comic for six months. Kuhn invited Lewis to address his colleagues at the University of Louisville, and Lewis was a smash; a partnership was born.

I had seen a videotape of Lewis addressing physicians at the Loma Linda University School of Medicine, in 1996. It was a strange performance—by turns free association, Catskills shpritzing, and slightly ponderous, avuncular advice—but it was impressive. Lewis spoke totally off the cuff, with all the weighty authority of being himself and nobody else in the world.

The event in Dallas, at the Gooch Auditorium of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, was a little different, in that it was organized by Victims Outreach—a local nonprofit organization dedicated to assisting victims of violent crime and their families. The Gooch seats nearly a thousand, and as many invitations had been sent out.

When I called Lewis's hotel room from the lobby, he answered the phone in a fruity English accent, his voice young and prankish, and I could tell he was excited: pro bono or not, a show is a show. But when he came downstairs there was an unmistakable heaviness about his spirit. I noticed a tiny flesh-colored hearing aid in his right ear.

I asked him how he was. "Tentative is the best way I can put it," he said, telling me that, along with his hearing, his balance had been affected by the meningitis. In Georgia a few weeks earlier to give a speech, he had fallen getting out of his car.

Still, there is a bullishness about him that brooks no interference from such trivial matters as illness and pain. Riding in a limo to the auditorium, he was in effortless command, joking about the driver ("clueless"), the camera crew that was to tape his performance that night ("It's easy—just follow the Jew"), and a hundred-year-old man, one Mr. Akin, who Kuhn said would be sitting in the first row. "When you're a hundred, everything is achin'," Lewis cracked. He grew momentarily serious. "I'd settle for a hundred, though," he said. He shook his head. "I don't know if I'll be goin' "—Kid voice—" 'I like it, I like it—don't lick it!' "

Kuhn and Lewis's road manager, Jeff Low, a balding, extremely large young man with the aspect of a no-nonsense gentle giant, accompanied Lewis into the building. Backstage, Lewis met Carol Cook, the event's organizer and a Victims Outreach board member. She grasped Lewis's hand with both of hers, supremely grateful, but Lewis was narrowing his eyes. A television reporter and producer were in the greenroom, asking for an on-camera interview. Lewis refused. "I don't do it well, it's under duress, and I'll take down the reporter with me," he said. "When I go on 'Larry King,' I have a prepared script in my head, plus we're old friends."

The TV people left and Cook apologized. "I had no idea," she said. Lewis managed a smile. Kuhn went out to count the house and Lewis paced, shooting the breeze about comedians he likes (Richard Lewis and Robert Schimmel), about going to the Lennox Lewis–Evander Holyfield fight earlier that month, in Las Vegas, which he watched in the HBO trailer. When I was a kid," he mused, "I used to go to the fights to be seen—I didn't care about the fight." He bent into an impressively deep squat, holding the top of a chair, to stretch his lower back. "I believe God sends us certain stuff, and what God keeps sending me is pain," he told me. "I want to say, 'Find someone else.' "

Kuhn came back into the room, frowning. "This is turning very sour," he said. "There are fifty people out there."

"*What?*" Lewis said.

There were traffic tieups in Dallas that evening, but the hour had passed when traffic could be blamed for the turnout. "Jesus Christ," Lewis said. "You can't bring an international star here from Vegas for fifty people!" He paced. "The last time I played for fifty people was in Boston when I was sixteen years old." He shook his head. "If Jerry Lewis can't get an audience *for free*, what's wrong?" He turned to Kuhn. "Should we leave?" he asked.

Kuhn shrugged. "Let's get out of here," Lewis said.

Just then Carol Cook returned, looking like a condemned prisoner. Lewis exploded at her. "This is humiliating!" he shouted. "I can't take Jerry Lewis out in front of fifty people, for free! What would that do to his psyche? I have to protect and defend Jerry Lewis! He's nine years old, and I have to live with him!"

Cook hung her head; her voice quavered. "Please don't say you're humiliated," she said. "It means so much to everyone that you're here tonight. Besides," she continued, "these people have paid money, and I don't have it to give back."

Lewis looked away. "Jesus Christ," he said. He paced some more, then shook his head again. "If my dad were here, he'd say, 'Just go out and do what you're supposed to do.' " Finally, he turned to Cook. "All right," he said. "You're about to see professionalism like you won't believe."

A few minutes later, Lewis waited to go into the auditorium as Kuhn introduced him. "I can't wait to see what I'm gonna say," Lewis muttered. Low, his aide-de-camp, asked, "Do you want water or soda?" "Cyanide," Lewis said.

But then there was a burst of applause, and Lewis strode in, shoulders squared, to the sight of two long rows of people down in front—maybe ninety in all—and a sea of orange seats behind them.

He did the show. And, once again, it was a very strange performance, especially given that this audience included so many victims, for victimhood is a state Lewis understands intricately. There was a mad, free-associative brilliance to the act. This was a psychodrama with a protagonist worthy of attention. Lewis immediately and easily referred to his chagrin at playing to such a small house. ("Believe me, I don't take it personally. But I will *kill* anyone that says anything to me in the next four minutes.") He told stories, he did shtick in his nine-year-old voice. He was occasionally on topic, speaking eloquently of the unnecessary self-seriousness of most caregivers ("Lighten up! Your patients know you're in bigger trouble than they are! The lady with cancer who's been given six months to live, at least she knows where she's going!"), the agony of victims, and the vagaries of the criminal-justice system.

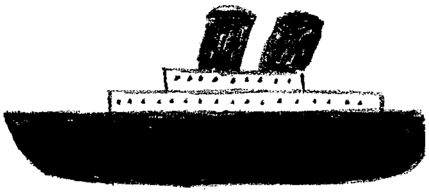
But, at heart, the talk was really sheer autobiography, and the earnest Texan audience seemed fascinated, if occasionally puzzled. He paced back and forth, declaimed on his love for his wife and daughter. He talked about the trials of celebrity: "I've been stalked for the last nine years. . . . It's murder. It's devastating. Particularly when he threatened my daughter. . . . So now I'm inviting him to come to my house. *Please* come to my house. I have an *arsenal* in my house. I will *kill* him, and have a victory dinner." Applause.

And the joys of celebrity: "Celebrity's an interesting kind of thing. Because the human condition *adores* it . . . There's a wonderful part of celebrity that affords me the opportunity to talk to people, and they hear you because you weren't some jerk that became very famous; you were somebody with a brain that planned it, worked it out, got paid millions of dollars for your talent, and you have to have some smarts. You couldn't have just been lucky. Except if you're Jim Carrey." He paused for the laugh.

"So when you get to see a celebrity who has, in this particular case, grown up with many of you, it makes it kind of special. It makes it as though you *know* the individual, having been there for fifty years. You *know* him. You feel like I've been in your home, I've seen your family, I have good feelings about you and I root for your well-being, and that's the way that I am. *I am that way.*"

His voice grew hard. "I don't want you to see the other side, because I'm *just* like all of you. I got another side I don't want you to see. I can be caustic, brazen, mean, nasty, unforgiving, and angry—I don't want you to see any of that. So don't ask me about it. Or please don't provoke it." There was an uncomfortable laugh from the audience.

"But when someone says, 'What's Jerry Lewis really like?' I say, 'He's kind, he's warm, he's sensitive, he's *deceptive*, he's a *liar*.' " Big laugh. "He cares about people. He has a passion, and an instinct, and a sensitivity, and a spirit, and a generosity, and a wonderment. And then you look at his menu. . . . It's all your menu! It's your menu! Mine is just up there because I'm a celebrity, but it's the menu of every human being on God's earth. . . . Special. There are people that don't particularly *need* to be special. There are those of us that are nuts enough to *have* to be special. And we do everything we can." He looked at the audience. "I flew from Las Vegas to come here tonight!" he shouted, angrily.



His voice softened. "My God, must I need it."

After a while, he turned to Kuhn. "How'm I doin', Doc?"

"Great," Kuhn said.

"Don't you think it's significant that Jerry Lewis travels with a psychiatrist?" he asked the audience.

AFTER the show, Lewis seemed pleased that it had gone better than he'd expected; he also looked tired. But when he and Kuhn and Jeff Low and I went to a steakhouse for a late dinner, he strode up to the reservations desk with his shoulders back, with the absolute certainty that he would be recognized and given special treatment. And he was.

He had been to the restaurant before, with a large party, when he brought "Damn Yankees" to Dallas. So, while the young woman behind the desk appeared slightly puzzled about who, precisely, was the old man with the slicked-back hair, snapping his fingers for a private table in the back, fast, a more seasoned employee remedied the situation with the immediacy that celebrity demands. We glided through the restaurant in his backwash, as the crowd parted and awed Texan voices whispered, "It's Jurr Luce. It's Jurr Luce."

Lewis sat, slightly abstracted. But then the salads came, and a waiter hovered over him with a gigantic pepper mill. Lewis did a very slow take at the menacing object over his shoulder. He stared at it. He stared at the waiter. "What are you doing?" he asked the confused man, with a straight face. "Why do you do that to people?" And the light waves around the table had been bent momentarily, not by the gravity of celebrity but by the force of comedy. ♦

ANNALS OF MEDICINE

CURING THE INCURABLE

A young entrepreneur gambles on the risky science of gene therapy to save his brother's life.

BY JONATHAN WEINER

WHEN they were boys, Jamie Heywood and his younger brother Stephen loved to arm-wrestle. Throughout their twenties, they kept at it, ritually, and for years the two of them were perfectly matched. They are both tall—Jamie is just under six feet, Stephen just over—and in those days they were both intensely athletic. But Jamie became a mechanical engineer, and he began spending his days at a desk. Stephen became a carpenter and, before long, he could beat his brother as a matter of course. Then, in the summer of 1997, when Jamie was thirty and Stephen was twenty-eight, Jamie surprised them both by forcing Stephen's right arm down to the table. At the time, neither suspected that anything was wrong.

Their father, John Heywood, is a British-born professor of mechanical engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and an international authority on internal-combustion engines. Jamie earned his engineering degree from John's department. (So did Ben, the youngest of the three Heywood brothers, who now lives in Los Angeles.) After graduating from M.I.T., Jamie helped test the hulls of boats for the 1992 America's Cup. Then he embarked on a series of entrepreneurial projects, managing teams of engineers, some of them more than twice his age. "Jamie was always a sort of bumptious young man," his mother, Peggy Heywood, who is a retired psychiatric social worker, told me recently. "His ambitions never fit his skin. He always wanted to do more or be more than he was actually doing or being."

Stephen was the artist in the family: the kid who, on family trips, tended to go off on his own. As a young man, he took up drawing and painting and then drifted into construction work, and he drove a customized Harley-Davidson motorcycle. In 1997, the year Jamie beat him at arm wrestling, Stephen finally figured out what he wanted to do with his life. He and Ben had bought a dilapidated bungalow in Palo Alto, with the hope of selling it for a profit. Stephen set about rebuilding the house as meticulously as if it were a work of art.

The Heywoods have a strong sense of family pride. (When Ben graduated from M.I.T., in 1993, Stephen wrote to him, "Always remember, be a Heywood.") When Stephen started his restoration project, the whole family pitched in. Jamie, who shared his brother's passion for fixing up old places, flew in as often as he could from San Diego, where he had joined a biological think tank, the Neurosciences Institute. In February, 1998, Stephen sold the house for almost a million dollars, making a profit of nearly three hundred per cent.

Soon afterward, Stephen went to see a hand surgeon in Palo Alto. His right hand had been bothering him. He could hardly open his front door—his right thumb and forefinger were too weak to turn the key. When he held up the hand in the California sunlight, the ball of muscle between the thumb and forefinger seemed to have atrophied. The surgeon referred him to several neurologists in the area. Their tests ruled out the possibility that Stephen was suffering from a pinched nerve or from carpal-tunnel syndrome. The neurologists told him that the weakness might be benign; however, if it spread, it might be amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or A.L.S., a gradual, mysterious deterioration of the nervous system that is also known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

IN the fall of 1998, Stephen moved back East to his parents' house, in the Boston suburb of Newton, and settled into his old basement room, which he called the Cave. He was planning to build his parents a new master bathroom while he looked around Boston for another old house to restore. In the meantime, he fell in love with a woman named Wendy Stacy, who was an administrative assistant in several biological laboratories at Harvard.

Stephen also made an appointment with Dr. Robert Brown, a neurologist at Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital, who is widely regarded as the country's most distinguished researcher into the causes and workings of A.L.S. On December 16th, Stephen reported to the clinical-neurology lab at Mass General for what he expected to be a brief checkup, in preparation for his appointment with Dr. Brown. A neurologist inserted needles two or three centimetres long into Stephen's biceps and triceps, the muscles of his legs, and even the base of his tongue, to record the muscles' electrical activity. The neurologist needle-tested what was left of the muscle between Stephen's right thumb and forefinger, poking it again and again, but he couldn't seem to get any reading there at all. The tests took five hours and were extremely painful. Afterward, the neurologist told Stephen that Dr. Brown would make the diagnosis in a subsequent appointment. The first thing Stephen did upon leaving the hospital was to call Jamie in San Diego. "Well, it doesn't look good," Stephen said. "There's damage in all four limbs." When they hung up, Jamie started a search on his computer. He typed in the keywords "prognosis" and "A.L.S."

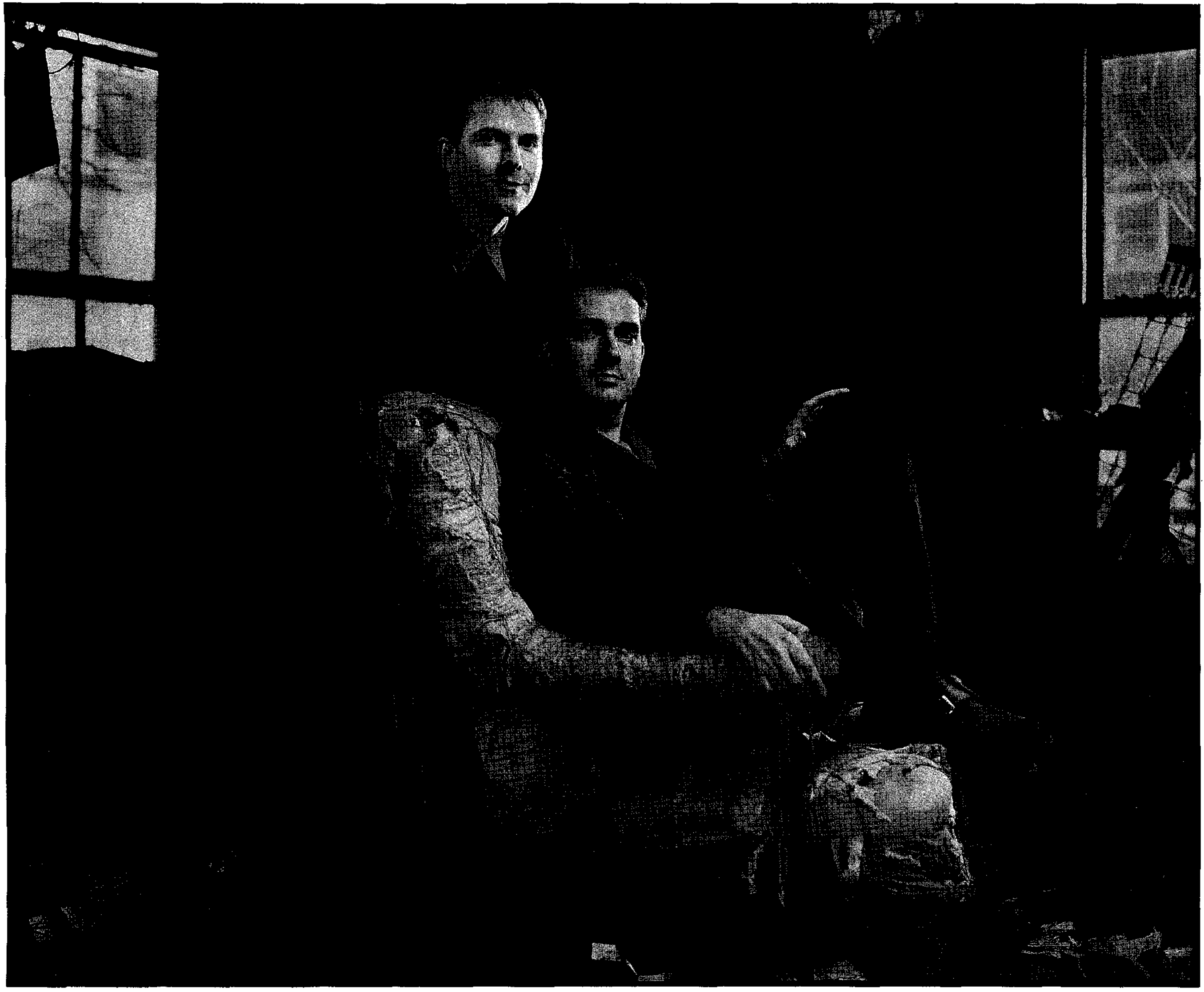
AMONG all the pathologies listed in medical textbooks, A.L.S. is one of the hardest diagnoses for a doctor to deliver and for a patient to receive. It has been a death sentence ever since it was described, in the nineteenth century, by the French neurologist Jean-

Martin Charcot. (In France, it is called Charcot's disease.) For reasons that are obscure, the motor nerves in the spine and the brain begin to die, one by one, causing a progressive paralysis but leaving the rest of the brain intact to observe the gradual failure of the body. The damage travels through the spinal cord until it reaches the brain stem, which controls the muscles that allow a human body to breathe and swallow. Patients remain fully conscious as their breathing muscles fail. Some choke to death on their own saliva. Lou Gehrig is the most famous victim of the disease, but about twenty-five thousand people in this country currently have A.L.S., and five thousand new cases are diagnosed each year. There is no cure.

Jamie's first computer search gave him the titles of twenty-five scientific papers about A.L.S. He clicked on the first one—a report by a group of neurologists in Amsterdam. The report said that most A.L.S. patients die within two years of the date of diagnosis. Patients whose first sign of weakness is difficulty in breathing or speaking have the poorest prognosis, because in such cases the nerve damage began in the brain stem. These patients can die within months. The patients with the best prognoses are young men with initial weakness in one limb and a long period between the first sign of trouble and the diagnosis. They often live with the disease for five years.

Despite the grimness of the reports, Jamie found the last statistic encouraging. He knew that Stephen's hand had been weakening for some time—seventeen months had passed since Jamie's first upset victory at arm wrestling. So Stephen was in the best possible category. Moreover, it seemed that A.L.S. research was advancing rapidly. Stephen's choice of doctor—Robert Brown—was fortunate. In 1993, Brown and his colleagues had discovered that a small percentage of A.L.S. patients inherit a mutation in a gene called SOD. Their discovery had enabled A.L.S. researchers to genetically engineer a mouse with a faulty SOD gene. For the first time, scientists could study the course of the disease in a laboratory animal. Normal mice live for three years; A.L.S. mice die, of paralysis, at the age of four and a half months.

In March of 1998, a leading A.L.S. clinician and researcher, Dr. Jeffrey Rothstein, of Johns Hopkins University, had reported another discovery. Nerves communicate with one another by passing molecules back and forth. The most common messenger is glutamate. A gene called EAAT2 makes a molecule that helps pump glutamate



Jamie Heywood and his brother Stephen, who has Lou Gehrig's disease, in their carriage house. Photograph by Martin Schoeller.

SABA

molecules out of the microscopically small spaces—called synaptic clefts—between the nerves. Without EAAT2 pumps, an excess of glutamate accumulates in the clefts. Rothstein had discovered that most A.L.S. patients have defective EAAT2 pumps.

A.L.S. is a complex disease with many tributaries, of which SOD and EAAT2 are only two, and there are at least four or five plausible theories about its causes. But it seems likely that A.L.S. is, in part, a disease of glutamate poisoning. As glutamate piles up in the synaptic clefts, the nerves become overstimulated. They fire and fire until they literally work themselves to death. At present, only one drug for A.L.S. has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration. The drug is called Riluzole, and it works by inhibiting nerve cells from releasing glutamate. Rothstein's paper about EAAT2 strengthened the glutamate-poisoning theory, because it suggested that glutamate may build up in A.L.S. patients who have faulty EAAT2.

In the course of his first hours on the Web, Jamie did not discover Rothstein's paper about EAAT2, but he did read about Riluzole. He learned that the drug, on average, postpones death for about three months. Jamie recalls that he left the Neurosciences Institute that evening feeling faint and dizzy. Two days later, he gave notice that he would be quitting his job in February, 1999, when his first year's contract was up. He had decided to move back to Newton and do whatever he could for Stephen.

At the institute, Jamie shared an office with a biologist, Joe Gally, who reads virtually every biological journal as it goes on-line. Gally—his colleagues call him the Walking Library—showed Jamie the Rothstein paper about EAAT2. Gally pointed out that in A.L.S. patients there seems to be nothing wrong with the gene that encodes the EAAT2 molecule. Its DNA is normal, but the RNA that should pass on the DNA's instructions has become garbled—misspliced. Rothstein's discovery placed A.L.S. in a novel category of diseases that seem to be caused by the RNA's missplicing—that is, by the body's failure to follow the instructions of its own DNA.

Jamie had never even taken a biology course. At the institute, he was, as he puts it, the "business guy": he had been hired to move the neuroscientists' research out of the laboratories and into the marketplace. Now he began a crash course in A.L.S., in the hope of discovering a breakthrough that would save his brother's life. He calculated that if Stephen had five years to live he might have only two years left in which he would be able to walk. To keep him out of a wheelchair, any treatment would have to begin in the first half of the year 2000, at the latest.

Jamie spent hours on the Web, on the phone, and in seminars and conference halls, exploring every field that had a bearing on Rothstein's discoveries about EAAT2—genetics, neurobiology, neuropharmacology, molecular biology. Gally was a constant adviser. "I really started having some hard sessions with Joe," Jamie recalls. "I'd get off the phone with four pages of scribbled notes, desperately trying to keep up. And then Joe and I would put it all together again. And there must have been twenty conversations like that." Jamie still has a copy of a rapid sketch that he and Gally made after one of those talks—a sketch of a cross-section of the human spine, drawn half in his own hand and half in Gally's.

Jamie is dyslexic. But he has a gift for visualizing problems and fields of force in three dimensions. "The one thing that I am really good at is putting things together in a system," he told me. "As I learned about this stuff, a sort of vision started to develop in my mind—

GEORGE GERSHWIN, PSYCHIATRIST
SNIFF
Your daddy's rich, and your momma's good-looking. What more do you want?
R.Ch

this three-dimensional pulsing matrix of elements that were connected to each other. And the matrix kept growing." In his vision, everything was connected to EAAT2. Investigators of A.L.S. told him that most of their patients, including those who had inherited the disease and those who—like Stephen—had not, seemed to carry faulty EAAT2 pumps.

Eventually, Jamie concluded that the most promising experimental treatment for an A.L.S. patient like Stephen was to get more EAAT2 into his spine. He talked over this idea with Ralph Greenspan, a neurogeneticist at the institute. Greenspan told him that, typically, it takes a pharmaceutical giant, like Merck or Pfizer, five to ten years to produce a new drug. Greenspan thought that there might be a faster way to go. He explained that although hundreds of academic biologists study A.L.S., the big drug manufacturers aren't interested in investing research funds in a disease that claims only twenty-five thousand patients in the United States—a statistic that places it in the category of "orphan diseases." Greenspan told Jamie that if he could pull together a team of academic experts, and coördinate their research, working as a sort of informal project manager (as he had done in his twenties as an engineer), then he might be able to accelerate the process.

Jamie was aware that the odds against a scientific breakthrough were considerable—especially since the kind of procedure he was contemplating was a form of gene therapy, which is one of the most controversial fields in medicine, and which had never been tried with A.L.S. Nevertheless, he felt exhilarated. "It was a very odd period for me," he recalls. "The decision to walk away from worrying about the next step in my career was intoxicating." Peggy Heywood says, with a rueful laugh, "If it hadn't been for the circumstances, this would have been the happiest time of his life."

"Sometimes I sell puts. Other times I sell calls. It's a full life."

• •

IN mid-January, Jamie flew home to accompany Stephen to his diagnostic meeting with Dr. Brown. Jamie found his brother laying tile and yellow limestone in their parents' new bathroom. Stephen's right hand was even weaker now, and he had also developed some trouble in his right foot. On January 13th, Stephen, Jamie, and their mother drove to Mass General to see Dr. Brown. After examining Stephen, Brown asked them all to sit down. The brothers held their mother's hands as Brown described the needle tests that Stephen had undergone, and explained all the lesser medical conditions that the tests had ruled out. Finally, Brown said gently, "I think the real question is where to go with a diagnosis that I'm afraid we're not going to be able to escape." Everything, he said, pointed to A.L.S.

Jamie hadn't told Stephen or his mother about the extent of his research. So when he started asking the doctor about EAAT2, Riluzole, and glutamate, Stephen wasn't sure how to take the questions. At that point, he recalls, he couldn't have imagined the sort of project that Jamie had in mind. Stephen himself had no interest in the medical details. "Something like this is very easy to not think about if you don't want to," he says. "You feel clumsy; you're limping a little. You think, It's no big deal." As he looks back on that meeting, he says that he was mostly concerned with keeping the others' emotions under control. Like his father, who has an Englishman's reserve, Stephen doesn't talk much about himself, and, from the moment of his diagnosis, his instinct was to soldier on. After a few minutes of Jamie's questions, he cracked, "So this afternoon I think I'm going to have to go buy a new Harley!"

Brown urged Stephen to get one more test—an M.R.I.—to rule out any chance of a brain tumor. As Stephen lay inside the scanner, Jamie and his mother sat in the waiting room and chanted softly, "Brain tumor, brain tumor, brain tumor." Jamie recalls that another family in the room was in tears over a relative who had brain cancer. "We thought it would be a relief if Stephen had cancer," he says. "With A.L.S., there was no treatment at all."

A MONTH later, Jamie and his wife, Melinda, rented a moving truck, packed up their belongings in San Diego, and drove across the country, keeping the gas pedal to the floor. "Luckily," Jamie says, "the truck was incapable of speeding." He had come to believe that every day of his life might be worth a month of treatment to Stephen. He hoped that he would soon have at least thirty people working on his EAAT2 project, and also on other A.L.S. treatments that he wanted to develop.

Jamie and Melinda moved into the Heywoods' house in Newton, and Jamie set up his computer and his phone in the basement, next to Stephen's room. He began calling and E-mailing doctors and neuroscientists in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, trying to interest them in the gene-therapy project. Cold-calling from his parents' basement terrified him. "Until now, I had been the director of technology development, calling from the Neurosciences Institute," he says. "And all of a sudden I was just anybody." He decided to create a foundation, with his parents' help, to raise money. They called it the A.L.S. Therapy Development Foundation. Robert Bonazoli, who was the first of several old friends to quit their jobs and join Jamie's crusade, helped him knock down walls to convert the basement into a proper office.

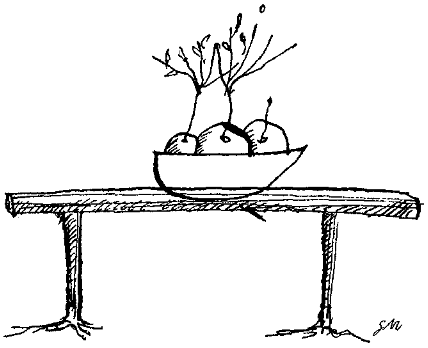
"That was the worst part for poor Stephen," Jamie says. "Your privacy is already violated enough when you have A.L.S. And then, all of a sudden, he would wake up in the morning and there would be four people working outside his bedroom door."

Stephen was still skeptical about Jamie's project. His brother had been spinning one baroque scheme after another ever since they were boys. "Jamie always had more energy than he knew what to do with," Stephen told me, with a laugh. John Heywood added, in the same tone of amused affection, "Jamie always raises the ante. He always escalates!" Sometimes Stephen thought about telling Jamie to quit the project and go back to a regular job. "But it was clear, early on, that it didn't matter whether or not *I* thought he should be doing this," he says. "There was no stopping him. He said, 'If I think there's even a possibility, I can't not do it.' "

Throughout that spring, Jamie put in weeks of eighteen- and twenty-hour days. He drove to laboratories in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, interviewing scientists whose help he hoped to enlist. A major obstacle was the frame of mind referred to in medical circles as "N.I.H."—not invented here. He often came home in the middle of the night, and then got on the phone the first thing in the morning. "He had a sign on a board down there that read 'Focus Focus Focus,' " Peggy says. "One day, a friend rewrote it to read 'Focus Hocus Pocus,' and Jamie didn't notice the change for weeks."

People tend to react in one of several ways to a diagnosis of A.L.S. Many simply get depressed; others try to fight the disease head on; and some deal with it obliquely, by living as fully as they can. In any case, it is not uncommon for patients approaching the last stages of the disease to take their own lives. For many weeks after the meeting with Dr. Brown, Stephen seemed as eager to get away from A.L.S. as his brother was to engage with it. He sometimes felt suffocated by all the A.L.S. talk around him, and began sleeping at Wendy's apartment and calling old friends as far away as Alaska. The work on his parents' new bathroom was going slowly, and he often stumbled when he tried to get up from a chair. "Sorry," he would say, because he could see the worry in the faces around him.

From the beginning, the family understood that, while they needed to fight the disease, Stephen just needed to live. Peggy says that she and John and Jamie talked about nothing but Stephen. "We *all* had A.L.S.—all the time," she says. "For us, the foundation was a source of strength. But Stephen needed some space from A.L.S. When you're inside a body that is decaying, you don't want the outside world constantly reminding you of it." Jamie says, "Close as Stephen and I were before all this, we were really very independent. And now we were interdependent. And it wasn't simple."

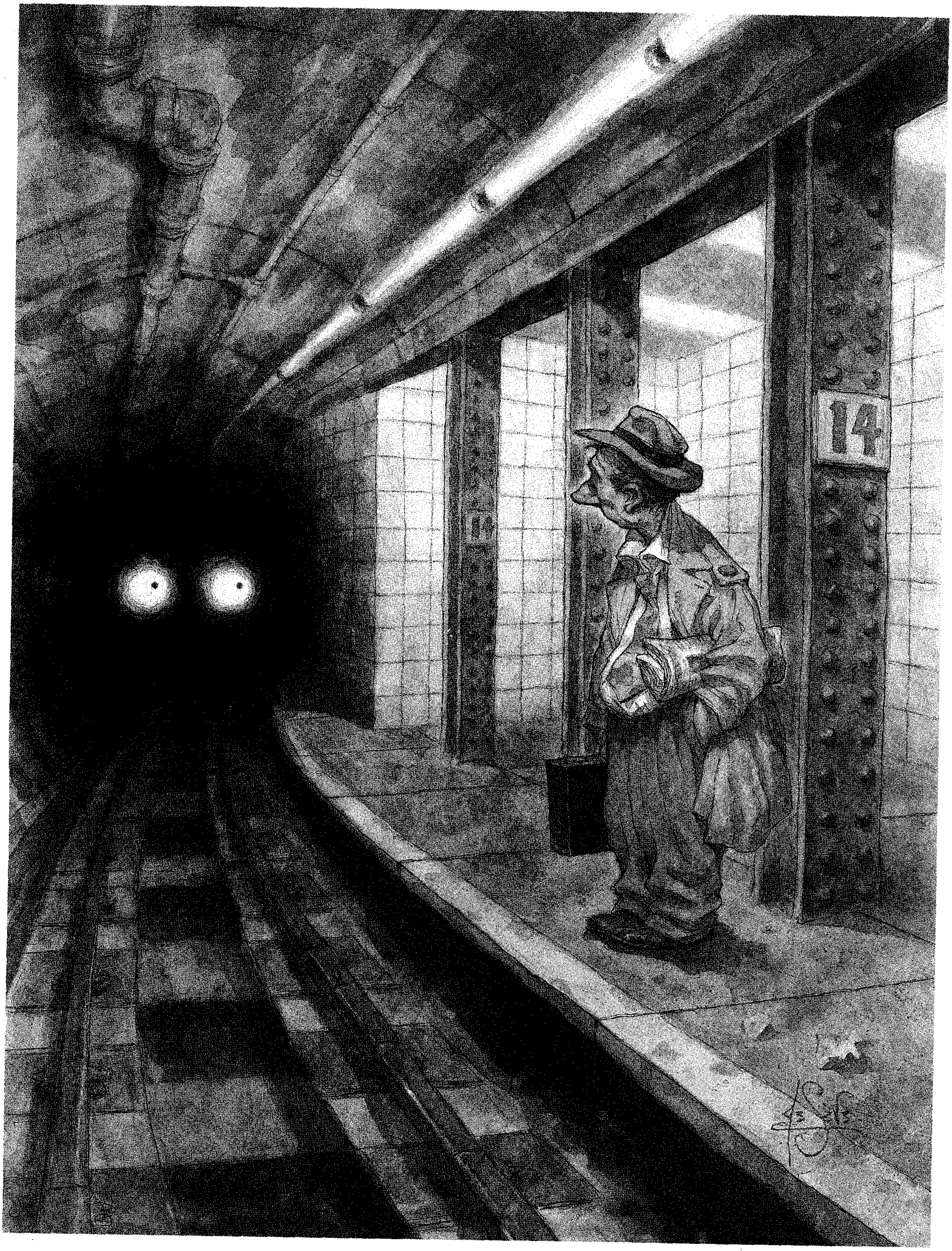


Gradually, however, Stephen began to get caught up in the sheer energy of Jamie's crusade. One day last spring, he wrote out two checks for five thousand dollars each and presented them to Jamie. He had decided to support his brother's latest scheme.

ON March 25th, Jamie made his first visit to Jeffrey Rothstein's lab at Johns Hopkins to talk with him about Stephen's condition and Rothstein's research into faulty EAAT2. Rothstein met with Jamie for several hours, and then walked him to his car. He told Jamie that he thought his project was well worth trying. He said that he would be willing to help, if Jamie could find someone to do the gene therapy. He also told him about a young neuroscientist, Margaret Sutherland, who was then at Vanderbilt University and was working on epilepsy, which is also thought to be caused by a buildup of glutamate in the synapses. Sutherland had genetically engineered some mice that made extra EAAT2. If Rothstein could get a few of those mice, he told Jamie, then he could cross them with A.L.S. mice, and see whether the extra EAAT2 extended their lives beyond four and a half months. It would be an interesting, though by no means decisive, experiment.

Once the Heywoods had incorporated their foundation, they held what Jamie billed as the First Annual Belly Dance Extravaganza, in a local Mediterranean restaurant. Jamie's wife, Melinda, a teacher of French literature, had grown up in Athens and as a child had belly-danced professionally with her mother. To raise money for the foundation, she and her sister—a molecular biologist—danced with finger cymbals on

SKETCHBOOK BY PETER DE SÈVE



their hands and swords balanced on their heads. With the tips they earned, and the checks from family friends—including a generous donation from Alex d'Arbeloff, the chairman of the board of trustees of M.I.T.—the foundation raised two hundred and forty thousand dollars. It was a pittance in a normal research setting but enough for Jamie to go to work. He reasoned that sums of five, ten, or twenty thousand dollars, if applied judiciously, could fund a project that involved a few principal investigators and a support group of postdocs and graduate students.

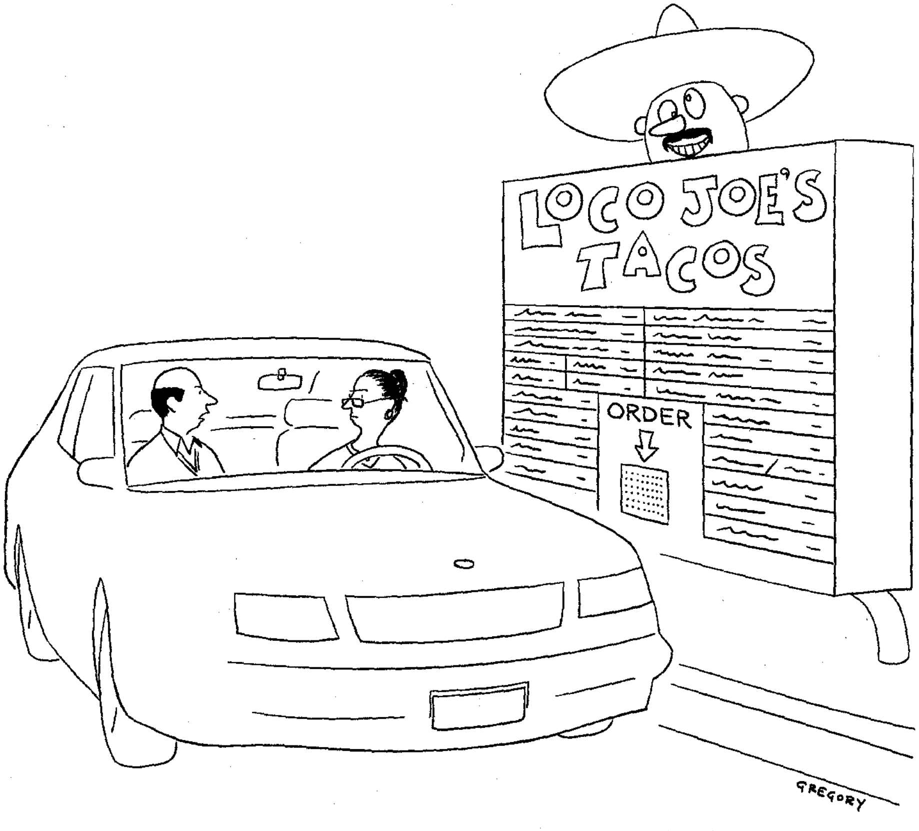
But first he had to attract the interest of a prominent gene therapist. One of Jamie's contacts had given him a list of names. Uncharacteristically, he sat on this list for days—whenever he looked at it, he felt too anxious to make the calls. Melinda remembers him pacing around the basement melodramatically, saying, "What is the next step? What is the next step?" All day long, she says, "Jamie was pulling at himself like taffy."

Jamie says that his procrastination was caused by a fear of failure. After his meeting with Rothstein, he had talked to a number of scientists who were contemptuous of the whole gene-therapy field. For twenty years, its proponents had touted gene therapy as the next great hope for medicine, but it had yet to produce any significant therapeutic results.

When I mentioned Jamie's project to a distinguished molecular biologist who is the president of a research university, he rolled his eyes. "Most people feel that this is the time to figure out why gene therapy is *not* working—not a time to be trying it on human beings," he told me. "Of course, A.L.S. is a terminal, awful disease. So when someone knows that he has it he is willing to do anything. It's a little like prisoners on death row. The question is whether or not we're ready for those experiments."

Jamie forced himself to call a few of the gene therapists on his list. Some said no; others did not even return his calls. Then, one day that spring, he got a call back from Dr. Matthew During, the director of the C.N.S. Gene Therapy Center, at Jefferson Medical College, in Philadelphia. "Until then," Jamie says, "I had been learning the lingo. When I finally got to Matthew, I knew enough to engage him properly." During listened to Jamie's pitch, and agreed to work with him and Rothstein on the EAAT2 project.

During is one of the most active and controversial scientists in gene therapy. In 1996, he and an associate, Dr. Paola Leone, carried out the world's first gene therapy on macrocephalic babies who suffer from a rare neurodegenerative disease of the brain called Canavan. The project was strongly criticized by some regulators, who accused During, who had started the work as a researcher at Yale, of trying to circumvent the F.D.A.'s oversight by conducting the trials in his native country, New Zealand. During denied the charge, and he and Leone are now working on a second gene-therapy trial for Canavan at Jefferson.



"Don't sweat the Castilian pronunciation."

When Jamie met him, During was preparing a paper about the improvement of memory through gene therapy. He had postdocs in Philadelphia and in his New Zealand lab working on new therapies for Parkinson's, diabetes, Huntington's disease, and depression, and also on research projects so novel that he was having trouble getting the results published. During, who has Jamie's boyish energy, admits that he is regarded by some in his field as "a bit of a cowboy."

Despite his workload, During told Jamie that he was willing to take on another project, because he respected Rothstein and because he agreed that the EAAT2 idea was promising. Still, During was guarded about Jamie's chances. "He's trying to accelerate three or four years into one," During told me. "I'm not sure that our first foray into this will be successful. I think we're a long way from understanding the disease."

THERE is very little treatment that doctors can offer A.L.S. patients. Stephen had been getting regular checkups from Dr. Brown, who, among other things, monitored his muscular and breathing strength. From the outset, he was given Riluzole to slow down the deterioration, and, for a time, he took Neurontin, an epilepsy drug. Early on, he entered a clinical trial of an experimental drug known as BDNF, which seems to have neuroprotective properties. For the trial, a pump was surgically implanted in his abdomen, and a catheter was snaked into his spine to deliver the drug directly into his spinal fluid. Six months later, a piece of the catheter broke loose and went floating off in his spinal fluid. The catheter is still there—there is no safe way to get it out—and one of Stephen's doctors told him, “It may not be a good idea to stand on your head.”

In June, Stephen spotted a run-down Victorian house in Newton. “I looked at this place and, suddenly, *bang!*” he recalls. “I’d assumed that I wouldn’t work anymore. But now this—it was perfect.” When he told his mother about it, the Heywoods remortgaged their house to buy the property. Jamie moved his operation out of his parents’ basement and installed a new office on the ground floor of the Victorian; he and Melinda set up house on the second floor. The property included a wreck of a carriage house, which Stephen planned to restore for himself. In midsummer, Melinda got pregnant, and Stephen and Wendy became engaged. The four of them went off to Paris together to celebrate.

In September, I travelled with Jamie, Stephen, and Wendy to the During lab in Philadelphia. Jamie’s driving, which was well over the speed limit, brought protests from Stephen in the back seat. After one of Stephen’s outbursts, Jamie said, “You never used to be this paranoid before you got sick.” That silenced Stephen until, a moment later, Jamie abruptly switched lanes. Again, Stephen protested. “I’m glad you’re looking out for us,” I said.

“It’s *us* I’m looking out for,” Stephen said, with his arm around Wendy.

By then, the work in During’s lab was well under way. During and his team had designed a DNA package that was small enough to fit inside a single virus capsule. In essence, they would be trying to inject healthy genes into select groups of Stephen’s nerves; the viruses would serve as trillions of tiny syringes once they were inside his spine. The DNA would consist of the EAAT2 gene and a few carefully selected DNA fragments that were intended to help the EAAT2 gene enter the nerve cells. In the jargon of gene therapy, the DNA is called the “expression cassette,” and the virus is called the “vector.” Jamie preferred to call the whole package “the gunk.” The gunk would be prepared at During’s Gene Vector Core Laboratory, in Auckland, and transported in vials, in a refrigerated box, to a locked refrigerator in his lab at Jefferson.

Getting the gunk to Philadelphia was one thing; getting it into the human spine was another. Eventually, During’s team decided that the best way to accomplish this was to insert a large-bore needle through the patient’s throat until it reached the intervertebral spaces in his spine. Then a very fine needle would be inserted through the larger one, and the DNA would be injected into the spinal cord. The patient would lie on his back, and the needle would be inserted eight times into his neck, injecting genes into the cervical spinal cord in eight places. The operation would be performed by the chairman of the Jefferson neurological department, Dr. Frederick Simeone, who said that it could be done with a local anesthetic. For the first safety tests, Rothstein agreed to supply the A.L.S. mice. “If your mouse is alive at five months,” Jamie reminded During, “you know you’re doing some-

BALLAD OF THE PATHS IN VÄSTMANLAND

Under the visible script of small tracks,
gravel tracks, forest tracks, often with a grass
ridge in the middle, between deep ruts
hidden beneath twigs heaped in clearings,
still distinct in crumbling moss,
another script runs: the old paths.
They lead from lake to lake, from valley
to valley. Sometimes deeper furrows,
more distinct, and sturdy bridges
of medieval stone carry them over black streams;
sometimes they evaporate on bare rocky ground;
you lose them easily in swamps, so
imperceptibly that one moment they are there
and the next not. They do go on,
always there’s a going on, you only have
to seek, the paths are obstinate,
they know what they want, and with that knowledge
they combine considerable cunning.
You walk east, the compass points insistently east,
faithfully the path follows the compass, like a streak,
all is well, then the path veers north.
And north there’s nothing. What does the path want?
Soon comes an enormous moor, and the path knew it.
It leads us around, with the certainty of someone who knows
what’s what. It knows where the moor is;
it knows where the hill is too steep; it knows
what happens to someone who circles the lake
to the north instead of south. It has done it all,
so many times, before. That’s the whole
point of being a path: it came to be made
long ago. Who made it? Charcoal burners, fisherfolk,
women with skinny arms gathering firewood?
The outlaws, shysters, gray as the moss—
still in their dreams the blood of fratricide
reddens their hands. Autumn hunters on the tracks
of pointer dogs with barks clear as frost?
All of them, none of them. We make the path together,
you, too, on a stormy day, on earth,
be the hour late or early:
we write the paths and they stick,
and the paths are more clever than us,
and they know all the things we wanted to know.

—Lars Gustafsson

(Translated, from the Swedish, by Christopher Middleton and the author.)

"Hey, what do you say we just skip Valentine's Day this year?"

• •

thing good." As I listened to Jamie argue with During about the precise specifications of "the gunk," I was amazed at how much biology he had picked up. He seemed to have learned exactly what he needed to know to get the job done.

A FEW weeks later, I spent an evening with John Heywood, in Newton. Throughout Jamie's crusade, he had, while providing strategic advice, maintained his academic routine, bicycling back and forth between home and his lab at M.I.T. "My job in this whole process is to do *my* job, so there's a good income coming in," he said. He had always worked sixty-hour weeks, and now he was working more, taking on extra courses in order to bring in more money to meet Stephen's expenses. While we talked, the kitchen phone rang repeatedly, and we let the answering machine take the calls. Finally, we played the messages. On the tape, we heard Jamie's urgent voice: "Pick up the phone! Dad, pick up the phone!"

When John got Jamie on the phone, he sounded ecstatic: "Jeff Rothstein just called me," he said. "He ran into Marge Sutherland. Her A.L.S. mouse is still alive!" Then Stephen got on the phone: "The mouse that should be dead is still alive!"

Rothstein, it turned out, had seen Sutherland earlier that day at a conference. She told him that the previous year she had crossed her EAAT2 mouse with an A.L.S. mouse. A single mouse in the litter had inherited both genes. That mouse, which had been born in November of 1998, was still alive—more than six months longer than expected.

John and I drove over to the Victorian house. Even from outside we could hear the exuberant voices of Jamie, Stephen, and their friend Rob Bonazoli. They were hunched over computer screens in the foundation's office, doing battle in a game called "Starcraft."

"So you've got exciting news," John said quietly as we walked in.

"*Very* exciting," Jamie corrected him. "Dad, it's totally awesome."

His father said matter-of-factly, "One mouse."

"One mouse," Jamie said. "But it's the oldest mouse in the history of A.L.S."

As it happened, Rothstein had heard another piece of news at the conference—one that he had made a point of not mentioning to Jamie. Jesse Gelsinger, an eighteen-year-old with a rare metabolic disorder, had unexpectedly died four days after participating in an experimental gene-therapy treatment conducted by the University of Pennsylvania's Institute for Human Gene Therapy. The young man was the first person known to have died as a direct result of gene therapy, and his death was especially shocking because he had been suffering from a relatively mild form of the disorder.

After the event became a national news story, I telephoned Arthur Caplan, a bioethicist at the University of Pennsylvania, who had helped shape the clinical trials that the young man had entered. Caplan told me that, although he respected During, he doubted whether, in light of Gelsinger's death, the A.L.S. project would be approved by Jefferson's internal-review board, much less by the U.S. Recombinant DNA Advisory Committee or—ultimately—the Food and Drug Administration. "Everybody's gun-shy about gene therapy now," he said.

"If you were talking to Jamie Heywood, would you try to talk him out of doing this?" I asked.

"Yes. I'd say, the best thing you can do for your brother is try and prepare for the worst outcome. And to line up appropriate spiritual support, and psychological support, and do everything possible to prepare for, ah, death."

To maintain perspective, Jamie had been talking regularly with an Episcopal priest who counsels executives. "Sometimes," he told me, "I have to keep up my confidence out of sheer will. I say to myself, 'There are fifty doctors trying to cure this disease. What are *you* doing here?' If Jeff Rothstein has to walk away from this project, there would be no loss for him. He's still a professor at Hopkins. But if I screw up it's all over. I feel like I'm walking a plank twenty-four hours a day."

ON January 13th, the Jefferson internal-review board voted to support the gene-therapy protocol. If the protocol is approved this spring by the U.S. Recombinant DNA Advisory Committee and the Food and Drug Administration, the first trial could begin in June. But on January 21st the F.D.A. announced that it was shutting down the University of Pennsylvania's gene-therapy experiments because of procedural irregularities in the trial that killed Gelsinger. The decision has caused Jamie and Matt During to reëxamine their plans. Last week, During told me that the F.D.A.'s decision has prompted hundreds of calls and E-mails from colleagues, reporters, and patients. "Everyone's gone crazy," he said, explaining that several of his patients were terrified because they'd thought, mistakenly, that the F.D.A. was stopping all gene-therapy trials. During pointed out that the viral vector his team is hoping to use for A.L.S. is very different from the one used in Gelsinger's trial, and that it is widely considered to be safe, although any protocol that requires repeated injections into the spinal cord carries enormous risks. "I think the whole field is going to be scrutinized more carefully," During said. "We'll have to set up new procedures and be more conservative in terms of the amount of safety data we collect before each trial." He and Jamie have decided to put together an advisory panel of scientists to critique every aspect of their protocol so that every step will be as safe as possible. "I'm afraid we're going to have to put on the brakes a bit," Jamie told me. "I can't tell you how much it kills me to say that."

In the meantime, During and his team will continue working on other A.L.S. projects that are at the outer boundaries of experimental medicine. One involves spinal injection of stem cells—immature cells that, it is hoped, will develop into healthy nerves. Also, During has for years been doing research on a neurovaccine for strokes and neurological illnesses, and, at Jamie's suggestion, he has been trying to develop one for A.L.S. A paper by During on his radical experiments with neurovaccines is scheduled for publication in *Science*, in the next few weeks.

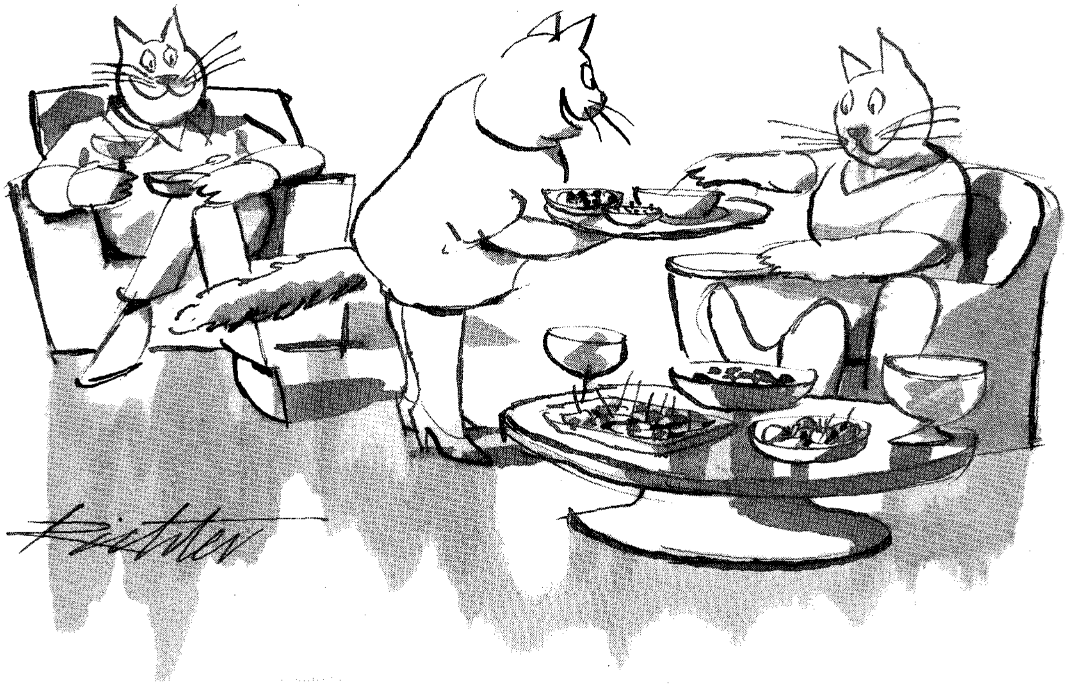
If the gene-therapy project does go forward as planned, Stephen—if he meets the protocol's requirements—will receive the EAAT2 genes in his neck. That is where the motor nerves that control the arms are situated, and those are the nerves that first started to die. Although Jamie hopes that the procedure will do some good for his brother, Rothstein emphasizes that it is only a safety test, a highly preliminary trial, in which the doctors will find out whether they are causing any harm. As of now, they plan to enlist twenty-five A.L.S volunteers from Rothstein's clinic at Johns Hopkins. After the procedure, Rothstein will give them a battery of tests to see if the genes have had any effect. The key test will involve a pulley system that measures the biceps, the triceps, the finger flexors, and the wrist flexors. Rothstein will be monitoring Stephen's decline or improvement essentially by arm wrestling.

In several weeks, Stephen and Wendy will be married in Grace Episcopal Church in Newton. Melinda and Jamie are expecting their baby soon, and Wendy has just become pregnant. "We would have had children anyway," she told me last week, after she and Stephen had their first prenatal consultation with the obstetrician. "But now we have to try to live out fifty years in the next two."

Stephen still keeps his distance from the day-to-day operations of the family's foundation, but he gives speeches at Jamie's fund-raising events. At the belly-dance extravaganza, he said, "My brother has given me a great gift. It's the ability to live my life with my friends and family as I see fit, while knowing that my life will have meaning. I know that my illness will save other people's lives. So, Jamie, thank you." At the second fund-raiser—a Christmas concert in Boston's Jordan Hall—Stephen told the crowd that since his diagnosis he had met many A.L.S. patients, in various stages of the disease. "No matter what stage you're in," he said, "you always think, As long as it doesn't get any worse I can handle this. . . . I think the key is hope. I know my own progression has been slower because I have hope for a cure in my lifetime."

NOT long ago, Jamie and Stephen gave me a tour of their carriage house. Stephen walked behind us, slowly and unsteadily. He said that he was now having trouble getting dressed, putting his wallet in his rear pocket, and eating with a knife and fork. We climbed the narrow steps to the third floor, which opened onto a dark hayloft full of rotting wood, rats' nests, and spider-shrouded dormer windows. Stepping carefully around a rusty bicycle and surveying the ruin, Stephen said sardonically, "So this is a bit of a deathtrap."

Jamie laughed. "No it's not," he said. "This is our house." ♦



"We grind our own catnip."

FICTION

BROTHERS AND SISTERS AROUND THE WORLD

BY ANDREA LEE

PASCAL MAITRE/COSMOS/MATRIX

“I TOOK them around the point toward Dzamandzar,” Michel tells me. “Those two little whores. Just ten minutes. They asked me for a ride when I was down on the beach bailing out the Zodiac. It was rough and I went too fast on purpose. You should have seen their titties bounce!”

He tells me this in French, but with a carefree lewdness that could be Roman. He is, in fact, half Italian, product of the officially French no man's land where the Ligurian Alps touch the Massif Central. In love, like so many of his Mediterranean compatriots, with boats, with hot blue seas, with dusky women, with the steamy belt of tropics that girdles the earth. We live above Cannes, in Mougins, where it is always sunny, but on vacation we travel the world to get hotter and wilder. Islands are what Michel prefers: in Asia, Oceania, Africa, the Caribbean, it doesn't matter. Any place where the people are the color of different grades of coffee, and mangoes plop in mushy heaps on the ground, and the reef fish are brilliant as a box of new crayons. On vacation Michel sheds his manicured ad-man image and with innocent glee sets about turning himself into a Eurotrash version of Tarzan. Bronzed muscles well in evidence, shark's tooth on a leather thong, fishing knife stuck into the waist of a threadbare pareu, and a wispy sun-streaked ponytail that he tends painstakingly along with a chin crop of Hollywood stubble.

He loves me for a number of wrong reasons connected with his dreams of hot islands. It makes no difference to him that I grew up in Massachusetts, wearing L. L. Bean boots more often than sandals; after eight years of marriage, he doesn't seem to see that what gives strength to the spine of an American black woman, however exotic she appears, is a steely Protestant core. A core that in its absolutism is curiously cold and Nordic.

The fact is that I'm not crazy about the tropics, but Michel doesn't want to acknowledge that. Mysteriously, we continue to get along. In fact, our marriage is surprisingly robust, though at the time of our wedding, my mother, my sister, and my girlfriends all gave it a year. I sometimes think the secret is that we don't know each other and never will. Both of us are lazy by nature, and that makes it convenient to hang on to the fantasies we conjured up back when we met in Milan: mine of the French gentleman-adventurer, and his of a pliant black goddess whose feelings accord with his. It's no surprise to me when Michel tries to share the ribald thoughts that run through the labyrinth of his Roman Catholic mind. He doubtless thought that I would get a kick out of hearing about his boat ride with a pair of African sluts.

Those girls have been sitting around watching us from under the mango tree since the day we rolled up from the airport to spend August in the house we borrowed from our friend Jean-Claude. Michel was driving Jean-Claude's car, a Citroën so rump-sprung from the unpaved roads that it moves like a tractor. Our four-year-old son, Lele, can drag his sneakers in red dust through the holes in the floor. The car smells of failure, like the house, which is built on an island off the northern coast of Madagascar, on a beach where a wide scalloped bay spreads like two blue wings, melting into the sky and the wild archipelago of lemur islands beyond. Behind the garden stretch fields of sugar cane and groves of silvery, arthritic-looking ylang-ylang trees, whose flowers lend a tang of Africa to French perfume.

The house is low and long around a grandiose veranda, and was once whitewashed into an emblem of colonial vainglory; now the walls are the indeterminate color of damp, and the thinning palm thatch on the roof swarms with mice and geckos. It has a queenly housekeeper named Hadijah, whose perfect *pommes frites* and plates of crudités, like the dead bidet and dried-up tubes of Bain de Soleil in the bathroom, are monuments to Jean-Claude's ex-wife, who went back to Toulon after seeing a series of projects—a frozen-fish plant, a perfume company, a small luxury hotel—swallowed up in the calm fireworks of the sunsets. Madagascar is the perfect place for a white fool to lose his money, Michel says. He and I enjoy the scent of dissolution in our borrowed house, fuck inventively in the big mildewed ironwood bed, sit in happiness in the sad, bottomed-out canvas chairs on the veranda after a day of spear-fishing, watching our son race in and out of herds of humpbacked zebu cattle on the beach.

The only problem for me has been those girls. They're not really whores, just local girls who dance at Bar Kariboo on Thursday nights and hang around the few French and Italian tourists, hoping to trade sex for a T-shirt, a hair clip. They don't know to want Ray-Bans yet; this is not the Caribbean.

I'm used to the women from the Comoros Islands who crowd onto the beach near the house, dressed up in gold bangles and earrings and their best lace-trimmed blouses. They clap and sing in circles for hours, jumping up to dance in pairs, wagging their backsides in tiny precise jerks, laughing and flashing gold teeth. They wrap themselves up in their good time in a way that intimidates me. And I've come to an understanding with the older women of the village, who come by to bring us our morning ration of zebu milk (we drink it boiled in coffee) or to barter with *rideaux Richelieu*, the beautiful muslin cutwork curtains that they embroider. They are intensely curious about me, *l'Américaine*, who looks not unlike one of them, but who dresses and speaks and acts like a foreign madame, and is clearly married to the white man, not just a casual concubine. They ask me for medicine, and if I weren't careful they would clean out my supply of Advil and Bimaxin. They go crazy over Lele, whom they call "*bébé métis*"—the mixed baby. I want to know all about them, their still eyes, their faces of varying colors that show both African and Indonesian blood, as I want to know everything about this primeval chunk of Africa floating in the Indian Ocean, with its bottle-shaped baobabs and strange tinkling music, the *sega*, which is said to carry traces of tunes from Irish sailors.

But the girls squatting under the mango tree stare hard at me whenever I sit out on the beach or walk down to the water to swim. Then they make loud comments in Malagasy, and burst out laughing. It's juvenile behavior, and I can't help sinking right down to their level and getting provoked. They're probably about eighteen years old, both good-looking; one with a flat brown face and the long straight shining hair that makes some Madagascar women resemble Polynesians; the other darker, with the tiny features that belong to the coastal people called Merina, and a pile of kinky hair tinted reddish. Both are big-titted, as Michel pointed out, the merchandise spilling out of a pair of Nouvelles Frontières T-shirts that they must have got from a tour-group leader. Some days they have designs painted on their faces in yellow sulfur clay. They stare at me, and guffaw and stretch and give their breasts a competitive shake. Sometimes they hoot softly or whistle when I appear.

My policy has been to ignore them, but today they've taken a step ahead, got a rise, however ironic, out of my man. It's a little triumph. I didn't see the Zodiac ride, but through the bathroom window I saw them come back. I was shaving my legs—waxing never lasts long enough in the tropics. Squealing and laughing, they floundered out of the rubber dinghy, patting their hair, settling their T-shirts, retying the cloth around their waists. One of them blew her nose through her fingers into the shallow water. The other said something to Michel, and he laughed and patted her on the backside. Then, arrogantly as two Cleopatras, they strode across the hot sand and took up their crouch under the mango tree. A pair of brown *netsuke*. Waiting for my move.

So, finally, I act. Michel comes sauntering inside to tell me, and after he tells me I make a scene. He's completely taken aback; he's gotten spoiled since we've been married, used to my American cool, which can seem even cooler than French nonchalance. He thought I was going to react the way I used to when I was still modelling and he used to flirt with some of

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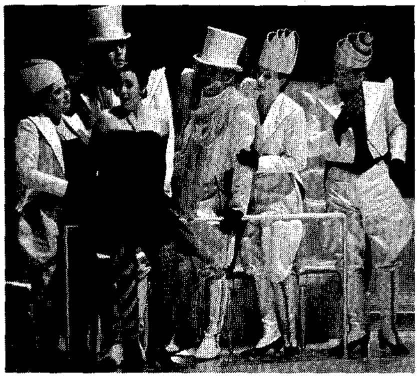

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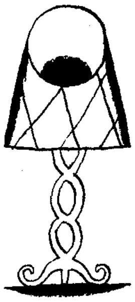
the girls I was working with, some of the bimbos who weren't serious about their careers. That is, that I was going to chuckle, display complicity, even excitement. Instead I yell, say he's damaged my prestige among the locals, say that things are different here. The words seem to be flowing up into my mouth from the ground beneath my feet. He's so surprised that he just stands there with his blue eyes round and his mouth a small "o" in the midst of that Indiana Jones stubble.



Then I hitch up my Soleiado bikini, and march outside to the mango tree. *"Va-t'en!"* I hiss to Red Hair, who seems to be top girl of the duo. "Go away! *Ne parle plus avec mon homme!"*

The two of them scramble to their feet, but they don't seem to be going anywhere, so I slap the one with the straight hair. Except for once, when I was about ten, in a fight with my cousin Brenda, I don't believe I've ever seriously slapped anyone. This, on the scale of slaps, is half-assed, not hard. In that second of contact I feel the strange smoothness of her cheek and an instantaneous awareness that my hand is just as smooth. An electric current seems to connect them. A red light flickers in the depths of the girl's dark eyes, like a computer blinking on, and then, without saying anything to me, both girls scuttle off down the beach, talking loudly to each other, and occasionally looking back at me. I make motions as if I'm shooing chickens. *"Allez-vous-en!"* I screech. Far off down the beach, they disappear into the palms.

Then I go and stretch out in the water, which is like stretching out in blue air. I take off my bikini top and let the equatorial sun print my shadow on the white sand below, where small white fish graze. I feel suddenly calm, but at the same time my mind is working very fast. "My dear, who invited you to come halfway across the world and slap somebody?" I ask myself in the ultra-reasonable tones of my mother, the school guidance counsellor. Suddenly I remember another summer on yet another island. This was in Indonesia, a few years ago, when we were exploring the back roads of one of the Moluccas. The driver was a local kid who didn't speak any language we spoke, and was clearly gay. A great-looking kid with light-brown skin pitted with a few acne scars, and neat dreadlocks that would have looked stylish in Manhattan. A Princess Di T-shirt, and peeling red nail polish. When we stopped at a waterfall, and Michel the Adventurer went off to climb the lava cliffs, I sat down on a flat rock with the driver, whipped out my beauty case, and painted his nails Shocking pink. He jumped when I first grabbed his hand, but when he saw what I was up to he gave me a huge ecstatic grin, and then closed his eyes. And there it was: paradise. The waterfall, the jungle, and that beautiful kid with his long fingers lying in my hand. It was Michel who made a fuss that time, jealous of something he couldn't even define. But I had the same feeling I do now, of acting on instinct and on target. The right act. At the right moment.

"Mama, what did you do?" Lele comes running up to me from where he has been squatting naked on the beach, playing with two small boys from the village. His legs and backside and little penis are covered with sand. I see the boys staring after him, one holding a toy they've been squabbling over: a rough wooden model of a truck, without wheels, tied with a piece of string to a stick. "Ismail says you hit a lady."

Word has already spread along the beach, which is like a stage where a different variety show goes on every hour of the day. The set acts are the tides, which determine the movements of fishing boats, pirogues, Zodiacs, and sailboats. There is always action on the sand: women walk up and down with bundles on their heads; bands of ragged children dig clams at low tide, or launch themselves into the waves at high tide to surf with a piece of old timber; yellow dogs chase chickens and fight over shrimp shells; palm branches crash down on corrugated-iron roofs; girls with lacy dresses and bare sandy shanks parade to Mass; the little mosque opens and shuts its creaky doors; boys play soccer, kicking a plastic water bottle; babies howl; sunburnt tourist couples argue and reconcile. Gossip flashes up and down with electronic swiftness.

I sit up in the water and grab Lele, and kiss him all over while he splashes and struggles to get away. "Yes, that's right," I tell him. It's the firm, didactic voice I use when we've turned off the Teletubbies videos and I am playing the ideal parent. "I did hit a lady," I say. "She needed hitting." I, the mother who instructs her cross-cultural child in tolerance and nonviolence. Lele has a picture book called "Brothers and Sisters Around the World," full of illustrations of cookie-cutter figures of various colors, holding hands across continents. All people belong to one family, it teaches. All oceans are the same ocean.

Michel, who has watched the whole scene, comes and tells me that in all his past visits to the island he's never seen anything like it. He's worried. The women fight among themselves, or they fight with their men for sleeping with the tourists, he says. But no foreign woman has ever got mixed up with them. He talks like an anthropologist about loss of face and vendetta. "We might get run out of here," he says nervously.

I tell him to relax, that absolutely nothing will happen. Where do I get this knowledge? It has sifted into me from the water, the air. So, as we planned, we go off spear-fishing over by Nosy Komba, where the coral grows in big pastel poufs like furniture in a Hollywood bedroom of the fifties. We find a den of rock lobster and shoot two, and take them back to Jean-Claude's house for Hadijah to cook. Waiting for the lobster, we eat about fifty small oysters the size of mussels and shine flashlights over the beach in front of the veranda, which is crawling with crabs. Inside, Lele is snoring adenoidally under a mosquito net. The black sky above is alive with falling stars. Michel keeps looking at me and shaking his head.

Hadijah comes out bearing the lobster magnificently broiled with vanilla sauce. To say she has presence is an understatement. She got married when she was thirteen, and is now, after eight children, an important personage, the matriarch of a vast and prosperous island clan. She and I have

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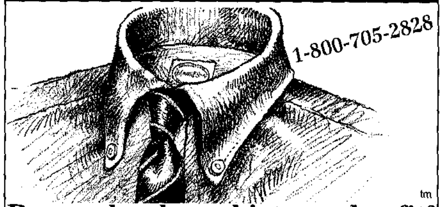

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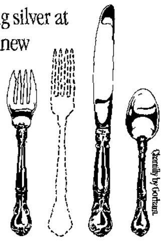
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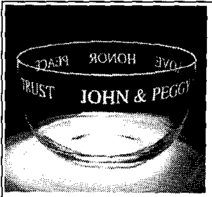

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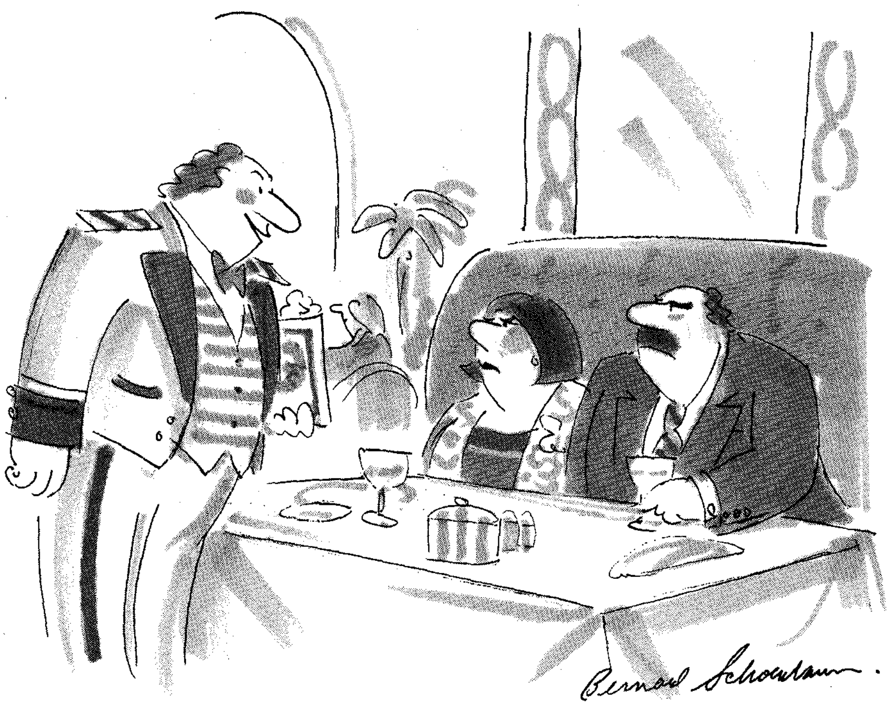

"Have you folks been menued yet?"

• •

got along fine ever since she realized that I wasn't going to horn in on her despotic rule over Jean-Claude's house, or say anything about the percentage she skims off the marketing money. She has a closely braided head and is as short and solid as a boulder—on the spectrum of Madagascar skin colors well toward the darkest. This evening she is showing off her wealth by wearing over her pareu a venerable Guns n' Roses T-shirt. She puts down the lobster, sets her hands on her hips, and looks at me, and my heart suddenly skips a beat. Hers, I realize, is the only opinion I care about. "Oh, Madame," she says, flashing me a wide smile and shaking her finger indulgently, as if I'm a child who has been up to mischief. I begin breathing again. "Oh, Madame!"

"Madame has a quick temper," Michel says in a placating voice, and Hadijah throws her head back and laughs till the Guns n' Roses logo shimmies.

"She is right!" she exclaims. "*Madame a raison!* She's a good wife!"

Next morning our neighbor PierLuigi pulls up to the house in his dust-covered Renault pickup. PierLuigi is Italian, and back in Italy has a title and a castle. Here he lives in a bamboo hut when he is not away leading a shark-hunting safari to one of the wild islands a day's sail to the north. He is the real version of what Michel pretends to be: a walking, talking character from a boys' adventure tale, with a corrugated scar low down on one side where a hammerhead once snatched a mouthful. The islanders respect him, and bring their children to him for a worm cure he's devised from crushed papaya seeds. He can bargain down the tough Indian merchants in the market, and he sleeps with pretty tourists and island girls impartially. Nobody knows how many kids he has fathered on the island.

"I hear your wife is mixing in local politics," he calls from the truck to Michel, while looking me over with those shameless eyes that have got so many women in trouble. PierLuigi is sixty years old and has streaks of white in his hair, but he is still six feet four and the best-looking man I have ever seen in my life. "Brava," he says to me. "Good for you, my dear. The local young ladies very often need things put in perspective, but very few of our lovely visitors know how to do it on their own terms."

After he drives off, Michel looks at me with new respect. "I can't say you don't have guts," he says later. Then, "You really must be in love with me."

In the afternoon after our siesta, when I emerge onto the veranda from Jean-Claude's shuttered bedroom, massaging Phyto Plage into my hair, smelling on my skin the pleasant odor of sex, I see—as I somehow expected—that the two girls are back under the mango tree. I walk out onto the burning sand, squinting against the glare that makes every distant object a flat black silhouette, and approach them for the second time. I don't think that we're in for another round, yet I feel my knees take on a wary pugilistic springiness. But as I get close, the straight-haired girl says, "*Bonjour, Madame.*"

The formal greeting conveys an odd intimacy. It is clear that we are breathing the same air, now, that we have taken each other's measure. Both girls look straight at me, no longer bridling. All three of us know perfectly well that the man—my European husband—was just an excuse, a playing field for our curiosity. The curiosity of sisters separated before birth and flung by the caprice of history half a world away from each other. Now in this troublesome way our connection has been established, and between my guilt and my dawning affection I suspect that I'll never get rid of these two. Already in my mind is forming an exasperating vision of the gifts I know I'll have to give them: lace underpants; Tampax; music cassettes; body lotion—all of them extracted from me with the tender ruthlessness of family members anywhere. And then what? What, after all these years, will there be to say? Well, the first thing to do is answer. "*Bonjour, Mesdemoiselles,*" I reply, in my politest voice.

And because I can't think of anything else, I smile and nod at them and walk into the water, which as always in the tropics is as warm as blood. The whole time I swim, the girls are silent, and they don't take their eyes off me. ♦

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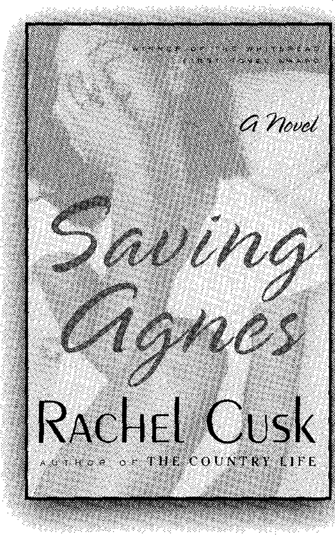
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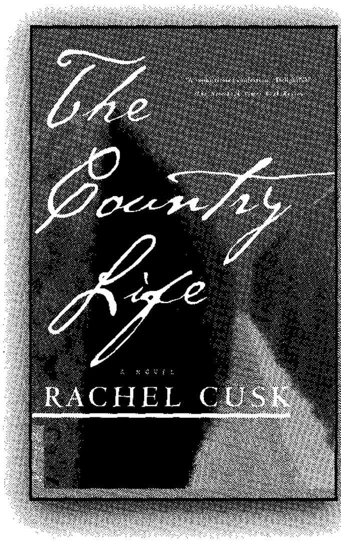

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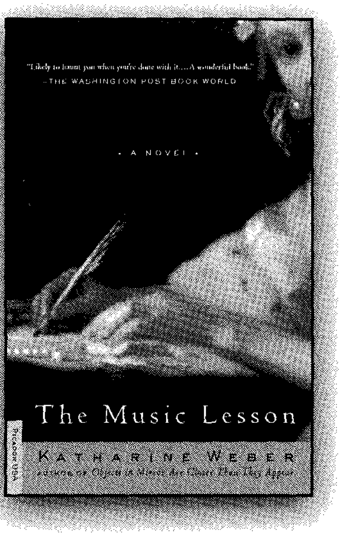

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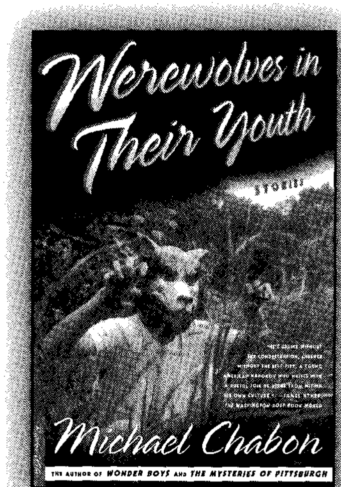
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THE CRITICS

A CRITIC AT LARGE

ASSASSINATION ON A SMALL SCALE

Mastering the comedy of tragedy.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

IN the opening scene of Penelope Fitzgerald's novel "The Beginning of Spring," Frank Reid, an Anglo-Russian, comes home to his house in Moscow and finds that his wife, Nellie, has left him. His servant Toma hands him a letter from her and says that it was brought by a messenger. Frank asks where the messenger is. "He's gone about his business," Toma answers officiously. "He belongs to the Guild of Messengers, he's not allowed to take a rest anywhere." Born in Russia, knowing Russians, Frank proceeds down the hall to his kitchen, where he finds the messenger having tea with the cook and her assistant. They are immediately joined by the shoe-cleaning boy, the washerwoman, the maid, and Toma, all crowding into the kitchen to watch Frank open the letter. Unwilling to disappoint them, Frank reads the note, by the light of a twenty-five-watt bulb that he has installed courtesy of the Moscow Electrical Company. (The year is 1913. Frank's neighbors still have oil lamps.)

> "Elena Karlovna has gone away," he said, "and she has taken the three children with her, how long for I don't know. She hasn't told me when she will come back."
>
> The women began to cry. They must have helped Nellie to pack, and been the recipients of the winter clothes which wouldn't go into the trunks, but these were real tears, true grief.

The novel goes on pretty much this way, and so does most of Penelope Fitzgerald's work. It is the comedy of tragedy. Not only has Frank lost everything but, reticent Englishman though he is, he has to act it out, as a drama, for the benefit of his whole bighearted, nosy, not excessively truthful household. He is honesty, fair play, electricity, looking for a foothold in life. They are life.

"I have remained true to my deepest convictions," Fitzgerald told an interviewer in 1998. "I mean to the courage of those who are born to be defeated, the weaknesses of the strong, and the tragedy of misunderstandings and missed opportunities, which I have done my best to treat as comedy, for otherwise how can we manage to bear it?" Life, as she sees it, is an exterminating force, or for many people it is, and those people—the "exterminatees," she calls them—are her foremost comic characters. Fitzgerald's exterminatees don't get blown up by a bomb. (Actually, one does.) They just don't get anything they want, and they don't expect to. Nor, Fitzgerald says, does she. "I'm an exterminatee," she once told a journalist, "likely to be stamped out with other things unlikely to succeed."

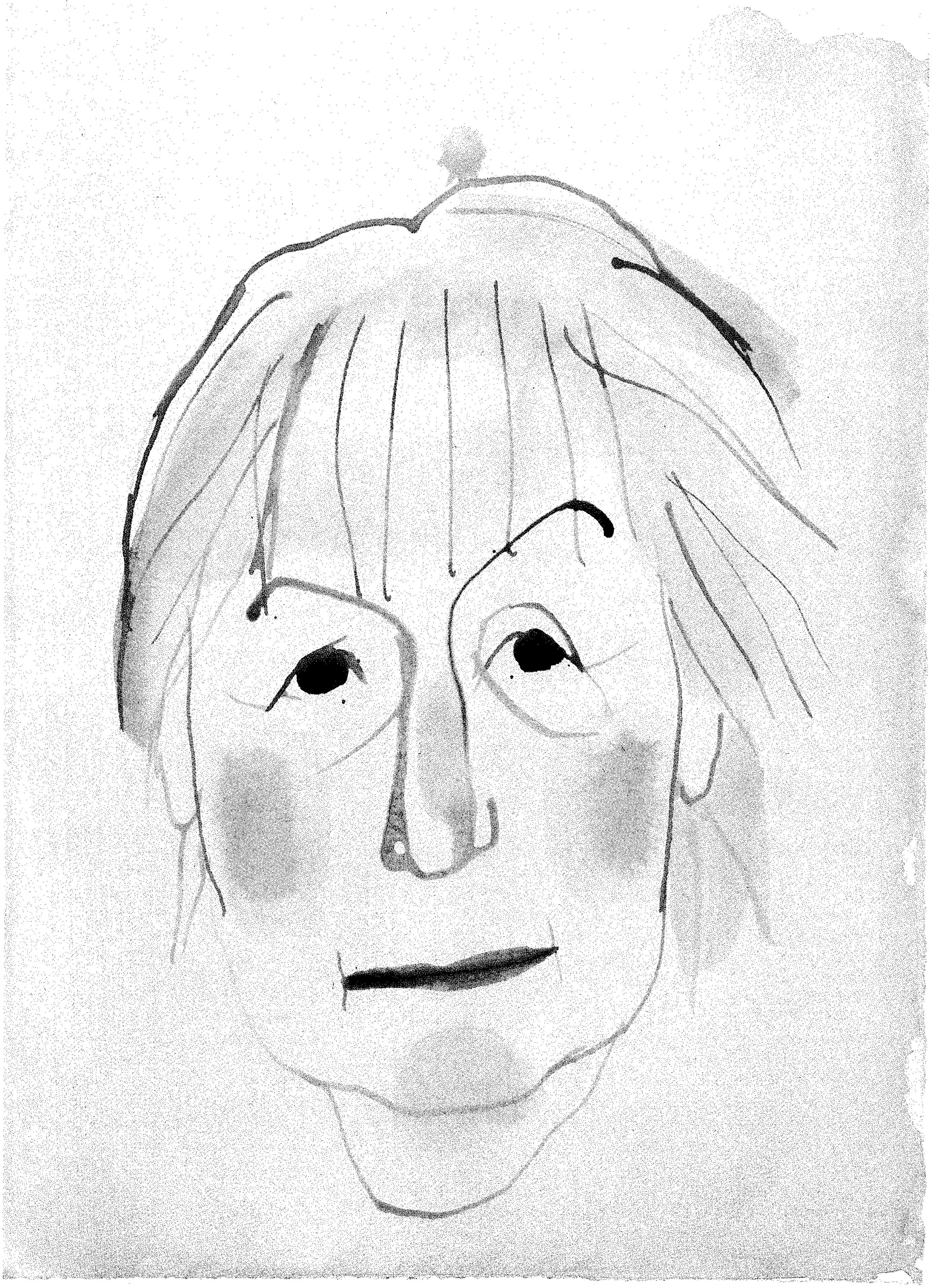
IN England today, it would take a great deal to stamp out Penelope Fitzgerald. She is considered a modern classic—of all British novelists "the best, possibly," A. S. Byatt (who has a stake in these matters) told Arthur Lubow in a recent piece in the *Times Magazine*. Furthermore, she achieved that status uncommonly fast and late. George Eliot, whose first novel came out when she was thirty-nine, has always been held up as the inspiration to late-starting writers, but Fitzgerald's first novel, "The Golden Child," was published when she was sixty. That was in 1977. Her second novel, "The Bookshop," was short-listed for the Booker Prize. Her third, "Offshore" (1979), won the prize. Writing is anguish to her, she says—torture. Yet in twenty years, from 1975 to 1995, she produced twelve books.

American publishers were slow to figure out that she was something important. Only in 1987 did her fiction start trickling into print in the United States. Eventually, she was picked up by Mariner, a division of Houghton Mifflin, and in 1997, very modestly—in paperback, in a print run of thirteen thousand—the firm brought out her most recent book, "The Blue Flower." So far, that edition has sold more than a hundred thousand copies. In 1998, it won the National Book Critics Circle Award, shoving aside Philip Roth and Don DeLillo, whereupon Mariner began running back and forth to the printer with Fitzgerald novels. As of last fall, with the American publication of "The Golden Child" and "At Freddie's," all her novels are finally available in the United States. Fitzgerald is at the summit of her career, the place a first-rate novelist normally arrives at around the age of fifty. And she is eighty-three, with arthritis and nine grandchildren.

I WAS repeatedly warned that Fitzgerald was impossible to interview: gracious, welcoming, and utterly evasive—a stone wall. "We'll see about that," said I as, batting bugs off my interview dress, I fought my way through the clematis to Fitzgerald's door in Highgate, a pleasant old section of London. She lives in what the English call a "granny flat," a small apartment attached to her daughter's house, but, as she explains to me right away, there were no grannies here before. The house's previous owner was the playwright Arnold Wesker, and this room was where he stored broken machines, "faxes and things," that he thought he might get around to fixing one day. Soon Fitzgerald is speaking to me as if she, too, were a species of malfunctioning machine.

My first question is about the curious form of her novels. They are very short (all but two are under two hundred pages), with brief scenes—illumi-

MATS GUSTAFSON



At age sixty, Fitzgerald became a novelist, the thing she was meant to be. At eighty-three, she's at the peak of her career.

nations, almost, as if a flashbulb were going off in the dark. "Well, right at the beginning, I wrote 'The Golden Child,'" she says, "and it was supposed to be a thriller, but it wasn't really considered thrilling enough. Colin Haycraft, at Duckworth's, told me that it was too long. 'I don't think people want to read these long books,' he said. So we cut out eight chapters, and that made it rather short. Since then, I've always written them short."

I suggest to her that she must prefer them this way, for she has now written nine novels at that length.

"I suppose I have," she replies. "They ought to be longer, really. I see people in the aircraft, you know, with aircraft novels, sort of like this." She holds up her fingers to measure about two inches, the thickness of a James Clavell novel, and looks at me regretfully, as if this were how long her books would be if she were a better novelist.

I ask about her late start as a writer. "Well, I think that everyone's got a certain amount in them that they can write about," she answers. "And they can write it early in life, or late."

I point out to her that many women writers have started late, and not by accident. It is interesting, I say, that she has never claimed that women's lot—children (she has three), low-level jobs (she had many)—prevented her from sitting down to write. "Well, I don't know as it did, really," she says. "I feel I ought to know, but I don't." Again, she looks apologetic.

If having a family did not affect the timing of her novels, it certainly affected the novels. Fitzgerald's books are filled with children, wonderful children: outspoken, tough-minded, frighteningly precocious. Often, they state the truths their parents cannot bear to face. "Were your children like that?" I ask.

"Yes, I think so," she answers. "I think if your mother isn't very grownup you have to be very grownup yourself." End of subject. O.K., how about *her* mother? I know this is a tender subject. Christina Knox, Fitzgerald's mother, died of cancer when her daughter was eighteen. ("I was just going up to Oxford University, to Somerville, which was the college that she'd been at," Fitzgerald once said. "I felt so proud to be going to the same college, then it all seemed so pointless when she was dead.") She tells me a little about her mother—that she was a suffragette and did a bit of writing herself. "It was work for publishers. For instance, I remember her doing a cut version of 'Pilgrim's Progress.' But I don't know. What does one say about one's mother? I just felt she was marvellous, but she died, and, again, what can one say about that?"

In recent interviews—under, I am sure, aggressive interrogation—Fitzgerald has said that she has strong religious beliefs and feels ashamed that she has never made this altogether clear in her books. I propose to her that she can atone for this now by explaining her religious beliefs to me. It seems to me, I say, that at times she views her characters through God's eyes. This gets a rise out of her. "I wouldn't dare do that," she protests vigorously. "No, I wouldn't. I mean, I think that Jesus was born into the world so that we could see God's view through human eyes, so to speak. And that's easier. It's not easy, but it's possible." Well, what about the circular time in many of her novels? What about the fact that "The Beginning of Spring," which opens with Nellie's leaving Frank, ends with her returning? In what she seems to imagine is an answer to my question, Fitzgerald points out that Nellie leaves in winter and returns in spring: "I've only been to Russia in winter, actually. Therefore, spring was about the end, as far as I'm concerned. I can't do summer, because I haven't been there in the summer."

"But you've written about a lot of things you haven't seen," I say. Indeed, she conjures whole distant worlds. "The Blue Flower," which is based on the life of the German poet Novalis, takes place in Saxony in the seventeen-nineties, with all the historical details in place: the menus, the music, the household laundry schedule. (The wash was done three times a year.) Fitzgerald is a maniacally thorough researcher.

"Well, that's true," she replies, "but I feel that one should go to Russia in the winter, if at all, because you need snow, don't you?"

WHY do we bother to interview artists? Why expect them, in two hours, to tell us their story, or—what we're really looking for—a story that will dovetail with the work, explain it? The better the artist, the harder it is to produce such an accounting, for the life has been more fully transformed. Why violate their privacy, brush aside their years of work—the labor of creating stories that are *not* their story? The death of Fitzgerald's mother? It is there in the novels, most of all, I think, in the comedy. "Offshore," the novel that won the Booker Prize, is about a group of marginal people living on soggy barges on Battersea Reach, on the Thames. The most endearing character is Maurice, the heroine's best friend, who lives on the boat next to hers. Maurice has tried over the years to get various jobs, but nothing ever panned out. At present, he is working as a prostitute. One night, Nenna, the heroine, comes home to find the deck of Maurice's boat weirdly illuminated:

> The bright light . . . issued from an old street lamp, leaning at a crazy angle, rather suggesting an amateur production of "Tales of Hoffmann," fitted, in place of glass, with sheets of mauve plastic, and trailing a long cable which disappeared down the companion. On the deck itself were scattered what looked like paving stones, and the leeboard winch had been somewhat garishly painted in red, white, and gold.

Maurice explains to Nenna that this is his new "Venetian corner": "I got the idea from a postcard someone sent me. Well, he sent me quite a series of postcards, and from them I was able to reconstruct a typical street corner. Not the Grand Canal, you understand, just one of the little ones." Maurice thinks maybe he will go to Venice: "I met someone the other night who made a sort of suggestion about a possible job of some kind." And if he gets the job, and puts the boat on the market, the Venetian corner, he believes, will be a selling point.

Of course, Maurice never gets a job offer from Venice. He will never see the Grand Canal, or even one of the little ones. At the end of the novel, there is a terrific storm, and Maurice's houseboat—with Maurice on it, drunk and happy—breaks its moorings and floats off toward the sea. This is a thrilling fi-

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BRIEFLY NOTED

MOTH SMOKE, by Mohsin Hamid (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $23). Set in Pakistan against the backdrop of the 1998 nuclear tests, this energetic first novel traces the fall of twenty-eight-year-old Darashikoh Shezad, whose precarious place among Lahore's élite is threatened when he loses his banking job. Soon afterward, he falls in love with the wife of his best friend, Ozi, and things rapidly decline as he becomes involved in drug dealing, thievery, and, finally, murder. It's Hamid's achievement that we remain charmed by Daru throughout; the fast-paced, intelligent narration pulls us, despite ourselves, into his spiralling wake.

THE MISSING WORLD, by Margot Livesey (Knopf; $23). The conceit of Livesey's darkly humorous novel is this: lovely Hazel leaves Jonathan, her swain, for good cause (beneath his nice-guy veneer he's a manipulative cad). But when she's knocked over in a pedestrian accident she loses her memory of bolting; she thinks she's still in love. Farce ensues as Jonathan desperately tries to keep her in the dark by muzzling friends and relations and fending off would-be rescuers. The result is Shakespearean comedy with Murdochian overtones.

POLK'S FOLLY: AN AMERICAN FAMILY HISTORY, by William R. Polk (Doubleday; $29.95). The "folly" of the title was a bit of malarial swampland settled by the first American Polks around 1680, and since then members of this family have fought the nation's wars, founded its educational institutions, grown its cotton (with the help of black slaves), and conducted its government. One of the Polks was President (James K., who directed the war with Mexico in the eighteen-forties); another was the author's brother, George Polk, the foreign correspondent whose murder, in Greece in 1948, has been called the first casualty of the Cold War. This lovingly constructed history, which concentrates mostly on the male Polks, evokes not only the dynamism of the American past but also the constant presence of war and violence in our national life.

ARTHUR KOESTLER: THE HOMELESS MIND, by David Cesarani (Free Press; $30). The author of this thorough life quite properly reminds us that Koestler—from the publication of his novel about the Moscow trials, "Darkness at Noon," in 1940, until his suicide, in 1983—was a powerful intellectual force, a prolific writer, and a tireless activist. (His "Reflections on Hanging" fuelled the movement to abolish capital punishment in Great Britain.) He was also a quarrelsome drunk and a brutal exploiter of women. Koestler attributed his bad behavior to an unhappy childhood; Cesarani blames it on his subject's refusal to accept the fact that he was Jewish. But Koestler's violent mood swings and impulsive actions suggest a man in need of medication, not religion.

nale: giddy, hilarious, and with a kind of eschatological note, as if Maurice were sailing off to Heaven. And that, in fact, is what happened. As Fitzgerald explained to me, she lived for two years on Battersea Reach, on a barge. There she had a friend named Maurice, and he did float out to sea: "Things didn't go right with him, and he decided he wouldn't drown himself by jumping off the boat, because that would cause distress to the other boat owners, so he went down to Brighton. He took the train and went down to Brighton, and he walked out into the sea and let it close over him."

In the family that Fitzgerald was born into, in 1916, both grandfathers were bishops. Fitzgerald's father and his three brothers were prodigious children, the kind of boys who build miniature tram systems in their bedrooms and write Latin plays when they are eight and send letters to Conan Doyle pointing out his errors of logic. (They did all this.) The baby of the family, Ronnie, when asked at the age of four what he liked to do, replied, "I think all day, and at night I think about the past."

The eldest brother, Edmund Knox—Fitzgerald's father—grew up to be the editor of *Punch*. The second, Dillwyn, became a Greek scholar and a cryptographer. (It was he who broke the German "flag code" in the First World War.) The third brother, Wilfred, was an Anglo-Catholic priest, the chaplain to Pembroke College, Cambridge, and a welfare worker in London's East End. Ronnie became Monsignor Ronald Knox, who, after Cardinal Newman, was probably modern England's most famous Catholic convert. He was the Roman Catholic chaplain to Oxford's student body and a translator of the Catholic Bible. Evelyn Waugh wrote his biography.

The years of the Knox brothers' youth were the scene of a furious battle in England—in all the West—between religion and rationalism. The scientific discoveries of the nineteenth century, notably Darwin's, had been gathered in, but how were thinking people to reconcile this new knowledge with the faith in which they had been raised? For intellectuals, there were two common solutions: either forsake religion or vault to a loftier faith, one that sought no agreement with science. The Knox brothers—for whom, as children of an Evangelical bishop, such questions were more pressing—split those strategies between them. Wilfred and Ronald decamped from their father's low church to higher denominations. (The father never forgave Ronald for "poping," as they called it in those days. He cut him out of his will.) As for Edmund and Dillwyn, they discarded their faith, a process that was no doubt as anguishing to them as to their father. In "The Gate of Angels," which takes place in 1912—and which Fitzgerald has said was based on her research into the Knox brothers' youth—Fred Fairly, a junior fellow in physics at Cambridge, goes home to tell his father, rector of a country village, that he no longer believes in God. He walks up the road with a heavy tread: "He would have to describe for his father, step by step, how he had expelled the comforting unseen presences which, in childhood, had spoken to him and said: Give me your hand."

Penelope Fitzgerald was shipped off from home to school at the age of seven—a separation that she says was wrenching to her. She hated school. She was a brilliant student, though, and had to be, for she needed scholarships. (The family had no money to pay for her education.) She graduated from Somerville College, Oxford, with first honors in English literature, in 1939, at the beginning of the Second World War, and in 1941 she married Desmond Fitzgerald, a major in the Irish Guards. Thereafter, for more than three decades, she had an almost ostentatiously undistinguished career. First, she worked in the Ministry of Food; then she had, as she describes it, "a very unimportant job carrying records about" at the BBC; then she edited a small literary journal, *The World Review*, in London. In 1957, the family moved to Southwold, a small coastal town in Suffolk, where Fitzgerald worked in a bookshop. Four years later, they returned to London, where they rented the barge on Battersea Reach for a pound a week—it was the cheapest housing they could find—and Fitzgerald took a job teaching at a school for child actors. In 1963, the boat sank, and the family moved into public housing.

One thing Fitzgerald declines to discuss in any detail is her marriage. She has let on that it wasn't really a success, that Desmond had a rocky work life. In one interview, she said that they never actually separated. She told me otherwise. In "Offshore," Nenna's husband, Edward, has moved out, and she is raising the children alone. I asked Fitzgerald whether she, too, had been alone with her children on the barge, and she said yes. At one point in "Offshore," Nenna goes to visit Edward, and he tells her, shamefacedly, that he has taken a clerical job:

> "You don't have to stay there! There's plenty of jobs! Anyone can get a job anywhere!"
>
> "I can't."
>
> He turned his head away, and as the light caught his face at a certain angle Nenna realised in terror that he was right and that he would never get anywhere. The terror, however, was not for herself or for the children but for Edward, who might realise that what he was saying was true.

Desmond, Fitzgerald once said, "didn't have much luck in life." He was probably a model for more than one of her "exterminatees."

It was not until Desmond was dying of cancer, in the late nineteen-seventies, that Fitzgerald began her first novel. But go back earlier, to the Knox brothers. Those men wrote as they breathed: biographies, autobiographies, saints' lives, mathematical treatises, detective novels, translations of Greek poetry and of the Bible, countless newspaper and magazine columns. (Fitzgerald's father wrote a comic essay for *Punch* every week. She still remembers the sound of him pacing in his study as the printer's boy waited in the hall.) Such productivity may have been a daunting example. In any case, Fitzgerald did nothing to imitate it as long as the Knox brothers were alive. Only when the last of them, her father, was two years in his grave did she begin her first book, a life of Edward Burne-Jones. That was followed by a marvellous biography of the Knox brothers. Then Desmond began dying, and to divert him, she says, she wrote "The Golden Child," a murder mystery—her first novel. Surely it would have been easier to go to the store and *buy* him some murder mysteries? Never mind. At sixty, Fitzgerald became a novelist, the thing she was born to be.

AFTER "The Golden Child," all of Fitzgerald's early novels are autobiographical. "The Bookshop" (1978) has to do with a woman working in a bookshop in a small coastal town in Suffolk. "Offshore" (1979) is the barge novel. "Human Voices" (1980) is the story of a group of young women with very unimportant jobs carrying records about at the BBC during the Second World War. "At Freddie's" (1982) takes place in a school for child actors. These books are tales of morals and manners, worthy inheritors of the Great Tradition. Small communities full of eccentrics; characters who spring to life in three strokes; conversations that tell us more than we're told—we get it all, and all renewed. The English novel is famous for its moral intelligence, but before Fitzgerald there is nothing quite like the child actors in "At Freddie's," so innocently hypocritical, experts in emotions they do not yet have. ("All children tell lies. But not all of them, if reproached, well up at once with unshed crystal tears, or strike their foreheads in self-reproach, like the prince in 'Swan Lake.' ") Nor is there anything like the damped-down sweetness with which, in the cruel world of the theatrical school, the director's secretary, Miss Blewett, comforts the institution's one genius pupil—Jonathan, nine years old—when he goes into fits of worry that he will never grow tall enough to be an actor:

> Only she could soothe his anxiety. . . . They would sit together and play a gambling game with liquorice allsorts. Miss Blewett handled the lurid sweeties with a certain air, having worked, she said, in younger days at a casino at Knocke-le-Zoute. When the game had got quietly under way, she would make kindly suggestions. Perhaps Jonathan might be auditioned for this year's *Peter Pan*.

If I am not mistaken, these early novels were Fitzgerald's way of explaining her past to herself, of saying to herself that her life was part of what she knew, from her long schooling in literature, as the great human tragicomedy. Had she gone on in this vein, she would have been simply a regular, excellent English novelist.

But as the novels proceed, they begin to fall apart, or come together in a new way. The scenes get shorter, and they start to contain things that we don't quite understand until those things come up again fifteen pages later. What was A-B-C becomes A-B-A, an assemblage of elements rhyming, chiming, with one another. At the same time, the books cease to end like novels, with a tying up; they end like poems, with a culminating

I was in another world, enraptured, unable to move ...

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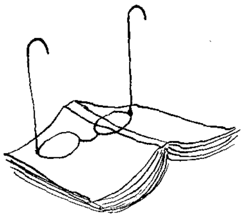
image. The last scene of "At Freddie's," for example, has to do with Jonathan, the genius child. Jonathan has finally landed an important role, in "King John," where, as Prince Arthur, he must jump off a wall to his death. He is determined to do the jump exactly right, and he decides that the place to practice is a weedy little yard behind the school. It has a high wall that is perfect. He asks various grownups to come and critique his performance, but they are all busy for the evening, so he goes to the yard by himself and is accidentally locked out for the night. This does not worry him:



> His object was to get so used to the jump that he could do it without thinking, and exactly the same way every time. The crates he had got hold of from the Garden [to climb to the top of the wall] were rotten . . . but by standing on the outside slats and exerting very little pressure he could manage the top of the wall quite easily. In the morning there would be someone to come and watch, and tell him whether he was right or not. Meanwhile he went on climbing and jumping, again and again and again into the darkness.

That is the end of the novel. When I read it the first time, and the second time, it seemed to me a hymn to professionalism. Yet it also had an eerie, fantastic note. This tiny child, with no food, no bed (he has no parents—he is basically a ward of the school), sailing through the night: it was like Maurice sailing off to sea. I mentioned this to Fitzgerald, and she told me that I had understood the scene better than I knew. Jonathan dies, she said. He kills himself, accidentally, leaping off the wall. But nobody had grasped this, she added, and that was her fault. The ending was ambiguous: "I tried making it clearer, but that seemed to spoil it, so I left it. To that extent the book's a failure." The book is not a failure—it's a small masterpiece—but clearly, as Fitzgerald was finishing it, something dark was brewing in her mind. If, with Maurice, she altered the facts and created a brilliant comic ending, with Jonathan she was not able to alter the facts, or to face them.

With her next book, "Charlotte Mew and Her Friends" (1984), she no longer turned her eyes away. "Charlotte Mew" marks a break in Fitzgerald's career. For one thing, it is a biography, a form she had left behind when she started writing fiction. More than that, it is an almost unrelievedly tragic story. Charlotte Mew, little remembered today, was an English poet of the Georgian period. She started out as a turn-of-the-century New Woman, but everything went wrong for her. She wrote only a few dozen poems, meanwhile suffering poverty, depressions, failed loves (she was a lesbian, and was punished for it), together with lacerating guilt over the little success and happiness she had, in comparison with the rest of her family. Three of her siblings died in childhood; two became schizophrenic. All Mew had left was one dearly loved sister, Anne, with whom she lived. Soon after Anne died (horribly, of liver cancer), Mew went out, bought a bottle of Lysol—"It has a violent corrosive action," Fitzgerald writes, "and was the cheapest poison available"—and came home and drank it. By the time the doctor arrived, she was foaming at the mouth. "Don't keep me, let me go," she said, and died.

Writing "Charlotte Mew" seems to have had a violent corrosive effect on Fitzgerald's imagination. After that book, she ceased writing regular English novels. She renounced autobiography; she abandoned home territory. Of her four late novels, only one, "The Gate of Angels," is set in England. "Innocence" takes place in Florence. "The Blue Flower" is set in eighteenth-century Saxony, "The Beginning of Spring" in pre-Revolutionary Russia. This change seems to have released Fitzgerald into some new emotional territory. Suddenly, in the late novels, there are scenes not just of defeat but of actual horror. In "The Beginning of Spring," a bear cub, brought in to perform at a child's party, is set on fire. We hear him screaming, like a child. In "The Blue Flower," Novalis's fiancée—fourteen-year-old Sophie, who has tuberculosis—is operated on without anesthesia. We watch the surgeon raise the knife over her small, unprotesting belly.

There is something else new in the later books: scenes of spiritual transport. Novalis has vision after vision; wherever he looks, world becomes soul. And it is not just Romantic poets who see from a high peak. Daisy Saunders, the heroine of "The Gate of Angels," works as a probationer, or student nurse, in the men's ward at Blackfriars Hospital in London. Here is how the day begins at Blackfriars:

> When the whole of the men's ward had been persuaded to face the morning, the patients washed, wounds dressed . . . the abdominal cases on their backs, the apoplectics on their face, the fractured skulls on their sides . . . and the bed-covers all smooth, all white, all blameless, all blank, all clean, there was a moment of balance and harmony, scarcely real, when nurses and probationers knew themselves as artists. Then a dark group, a black patch, began to move up the white rows that gave the hard-won illusion of peace, and at one bed or another, indicated by Matron, the consulting surgeon, with his train of students, paused. The white bed then became a place of anxiety and pain, or the memory of pain, or the expectation of it. When surgeon, Matron and students moved on, the probationers, at a respectful distance, straightened the sheets, the pillows and the coverlet and settled the patient, who had not only been frightened but was now suffering from the loss of his only few minutes of importance in the men's ward of the Blackfriars, and, perhaps, on this earth.

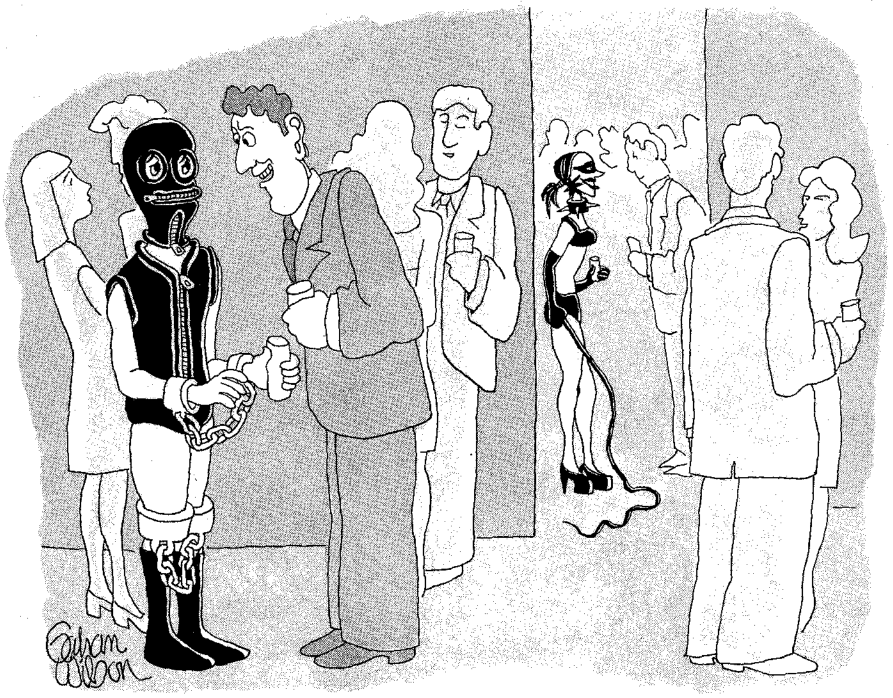
We are gazing from on high. And much in the late novels sounds as though it had been written from on high—or, at least, not in a granny flat in Highgate. If in her early novels Fitzgerald began to take liberties, now she is freed altogether. Time becomes elastic. Some chapters end almost as soon as they've begun. On the other hand, if Fitzgerald wants to take the space to include the table of contents of a late-eighteenth-century treatise on salt mining (Novalis was studying to be a salt-mine inspector), she does so. She lets her characters break into her narration; she accomplishes whole scenes in fragments. What was once Great Tradition writing is now licked by a Joycean flame. The old way is not abandoned. The books still have stories, told by an omniscient narrator. Above all, they still have the burning moral focus of the nineteenth-century novel. But they apply it on the run, in flashes—illuminations, then darkness again. They are cut versions of "Pilgrim's Progress," as it were.

THE most daring of them is "The Blue Flower." This is really a very strange novel. (Amazing, that it has sold a hundred thousand copies.) Its subject, to begin with, is bizarre: the story of Novalis's love for Sophie, a little girl with a double chin and nothing in her head. He falls in love with her at first sight, when he is twenty-two and she is twelve. It takes her a year to learn how to pronounce his name. He discourses to her of the soul, and asks her if, after death, she would like to be reborn. Yes, she says, if she could come back blond. On the surface, the narration proceeds in a regular way. This happens, and that, to this person and that. But in its depth, in its tone, something else is going on, some brooding. Looking back on the novel, one feels almost as if the events had all happened simultaneously, and all the characters were refractions of Novalis. "Sophie be my guardian spirit": these are the words inscribed in the ring Novalis gives Sophie, and in some measure she is his spirit. He also has a dark angel, his little brother Bernhard. At the beginning of the novel, he rescues Bernhard from drowning in the river near their home. At the end of the novel, Bernhard drowns in that same river. A few months later, Novalis, too, is dead—he died at twenty-nine—soon followed by a number of his other siblings. (Novalis's mother outlived ten of her eleven children.) This is not to speak of Sophie's long agony. Yet Fitzgerald's touch remains light, lyrical. To pinpoint the exact quality of "The Blue Flower" is extremely difficult. It is one of the most poetic novels ever written. Fitzgerald has said that the idea for the book came to her from music. Once, during a church service in Bonn, she heard some musical settings of Novalis's poems, his "Hymns to the Night," and she began to look into his life.

Not all of her late novels are so weird and exalted. "Innocence" and "The Beginning of Spring" are about you and me. They are very funny books and, with "Offshore," her best "reads." Still, they make no bones about the fact that life, for most people, is basically a disaster. In "The Gate of Angels," Fred Fairly, as he is walking home to tell his father that he no longer believes in God, hears a kind of bustle in the hedges by the side of the road:

> The bushes . . . were motionless, but from the crowded stalks and the dense hedges there came a perpetual furtive humming, whining and rustling which suggested an alarming amount of activity out of sight. Twigs snapped and dropped from above, sticky threads drifted across from nowhere, there seemed to be something like an assassination, on a small scale, taking place in the tranquil heart of summer.

That's life in a Fitzgerald novel: assassination on a small scale. And what does it mean? Well, says Nenna's sister in "Offshore," her husband has a theory: "He believes there's a Providence not so far away from us, really just above our heads if we could see it, that wants things to be the way they're eventually going." Don't laugh—Fitzgerald believes the same thing. She combines



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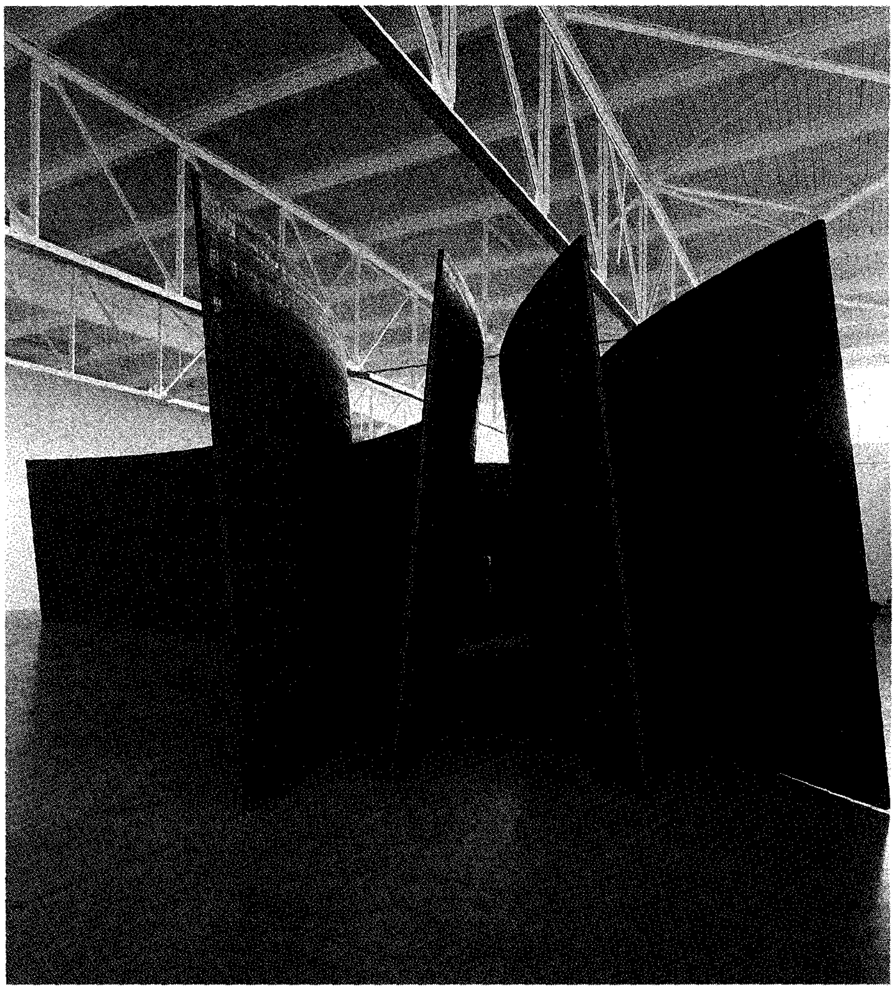
an old-world faith with a completely modern pessimism.

In “The Blue Flower,” immediately after the ghastly episode of Sophie’s operation, Novalis and his family journey to their moldering country estate, overrun by damp and chickens. The scene of their arrival is almost not a scene but an emotion. “There was . . . a diffused sense, in that misty valley, of relaxation, of perpetual forgiveness, of coming home after having done one’s best.” Novalis’s father embraces the old caretaker. “We have suffered,” he says. The caretaker answers, “I know it, Excellency.” A pearly dusk encloses them.

Here Fitzgerald hits the elegiac note. That is one way (in literature, in church) to kill pain: blend it with kindness. But what is interesting about Fitzgerald is that ordinarily she withholds that balm. She has the ingredients—cruelty, comedy, pity (“Give me your hand”)—but, for the most part, she refuses to blend them. They remain separate, and go on making their opposing claims. At the end of “Innocence,” a man on a farm outside Florence takes a shotgun and threatens to kill himself. An attendant dog, thinking it’s time to go hunting, begins wagging her tail. In a boarding house in Jena, Novalis’s Sophie is leaking pus from her third futile operation; in a nearby inn Novalis’s little brother, Bernhard—the one who will drown—is inspecting the hydraulics of the hostelry’s coffee urn, and his sister fails to remember the name of Dietmahler, the surgeon’s assistant, who is in love with her. Dietmahler thereupon decides to give up and move to England. He used to know a Dr. Brown in England. Dr. Brown is dead, but his two sons are practicing in London. Maybe they could get him a job. Up the street, Sophie is dying, but Dietmahler has his problems, too. Should he take his mother to England, he wonders, or should he leave her in Germany and just send money? The world is tragic, but none of its creatures ever seem to get the message. They just go on trying to make their way.

Terrifying in their meaning, these novels are still comedies, and that is the secret of their power. Reading them is like hearing someone play Mozart two rooms away: light, sweet—jolly, even—and utterly piercing, like a needle through the heart. ♦



Serra’s “Switch,” at the Gagosian Gallery: A Whitmanesque benevolence.

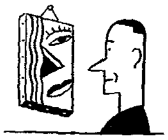
ROBERT McKEEVER/GAGOSIAN GALLERY

THE ART WORLD

SERRA SMILES

The new friendliness of America’s most fearsome sculptor.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL



“TODAY many art worldlings regard Richard Serra as America’s greatest sculptor,” Tom Wolfe writes with scorn in a recent issue of the *Times Magazine*. Wolfe’s article, “The Artist the Art World Couldn’t See,” is about Frederick Hart, a floridly rhetorical figurative sculptor who died last year. Hart made the bronze of three soldiers that was added to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington in 1984 at the insistence of veterans and politicians who deplored the unheroic plainness of Maya Lin’s black chevron wall. Wolfe proposes Hart as the harbinger of a mighty conservative insurrection against “the abstract, distorted or ‘wounded’ art of the Modern tradition.”

By way of negative contrast to Hart’s virtues of “skill” and popularity, Wolfe cites Serra’s “Tilted Arc”—a curved and leaning steel plate that was erected on the plaza of the Javits Federal Building, in New York, in 1981 and then, after eight years of controversy, taken down. Serra, Wolfe writes, “achieved an eminence of immaculate purity: his work involved absolutely no skill and was despised by everyone outside the art world who saw it.” Disclosure: I once wrote a column in which I declared "Tilted Arc" a disaster as public art and endorsed its removal. Still, I regard Serra as indeed a great sculptor—now more than ever, after seeing his exhilarating new work, entitled "Switch," at the new Chelsea branch of the Gagosian Gallery.

Wolfe's visit to the chronic gap between educated taste and demotic taste displays his usual sharp timing. Art that swears by radical principles really has lost the old confidence with which it used to face down short-term public unhappiness. Wolfe hits on an urgent question: What makes for artistic legitimacy now? His own answer—which, in effect, boils down to what was familiar a century ago—is far-fetched. Musty, corny styles like Hart's will dominate new art when, say, stone tools drive out computers. The likely future will emerge where it always does—in novel and convincing perspectives on the present. A case in point is "Switch," which builds on the local triumph, two years ago at the Dia Center for the Arts, of a terrific group of steel semi-enclosures called "Torqued Ellipses." Serra is not only doing the best work of his thirty-four-year career. He is shifting the attitude of his notoriously truculent aesthetic in ways, both majestic and positively friendly, that may help to heal our riven art culture.

"Switch" consists of six identical freestanding steel walls that curve and tilt; they are conical sections, with one of the sides shorter than the other. Each measures more than thirteen feet high by more than fifty feet long and, two inches thick, weighs twenty-eight tons. The walls are arrayed in a sort of imploded trefoil: three sets of two parallel structures, their curves veering toward a common middle. You can enter the roughly triangular space in the center, and you can pass through the corridors formed by the paired walls. The walls don't look identical, because they are variously set on their long or short sides. They converge overhead in one corridor, diverge in another, and lean the same way in the third. As usual with Serra, the steel is the type termed "weatherproof," whose rusting surface seals it against further deterioration.

Watch people entering the Gagosian space. The body language of most of them says, "Ah." That's "Ah," not "Wow!"—the more predictable response to anything this titanic. "Switch" is beautiful. Beauty prevents it from being awesome, let alone daunting, even as it fills your gaze from side to side and looms above you. You submit to its sweeping shapes and blooming patinas before you are aware of having a choice in the matter. Pleasure is immediate, and, as you move around and through the work, it is continually varied and renewed. Bigness and weight register not as aggression but as generosity: an overflowing sufficiency of solemn loveliness. You cannot use up "Switch." Especially delightful is an aspect that deserves to be called "figurative"—the figures being the bodies of the viewers, including yours. People look cherishably congenial and alive as they perambulate "Switch." The effect is Whitmanesque: a Brooklyn Ferry of an art work.

HOW did Serra develop from the most menacing paladin of Minimalism into a practically benevolent social poet? The change is amazingly subtle. He hasn't altered the basic quality of his sculpture—its self-dramatizing, burly physicality. Back in the late sixties, he began enlisting gravity alone to support propped-up, dangerous-looking configurations of lead elements. Like all Minimalist art, Serra's early and middlephase work made viewers hyperconscious of both themselves and the surrounding space—usually with a hint of distinctive, brooding, Godzilla-stomps-Tokyo animus. He had it in for supposedly neutral and benign institutional architecture. His works wrecked the equanimity of one art zone after another. Trouble arose when the zones became tax-funded. The "Tilted Arc" debacle marked the end of the society-defying, modern-art revolutionary, whose last avatar was Serra. It was "The Fountainhead" as farce.

Serra is another kind of hero now—not exactly chastened but with a more bighearted sense of what sculpture can do, both in and for the world. His recent work embodies a changed relationship to architecture: rivalling rather than assaulting it. "Switch" is a place unto itself, inviting viewers into a graceful, remarkably playful experience. (That sound you hear is of people humming and clapping in the potent echo chamber of the corridor with inward-leaning walls.) A certain nostalgia flavors the piece, with its industrial-era evocation of smoky factories and resounding shipyards. But the work's invitingly open, processional dynamics feel brand-new. They teach innovative manners to our global environment of airports, malls, casinos, and other crowded sites. Call it twenty-first-century Baroque. How can built space make individuals feel at once centered in themselves and welcomed into a teeming civility? Like this.

The main factor in Serra's current growth has, I believe, a name—Frank Gehry. The artist and the architect are old friends, and Gehry acknowledges Serra's work as an influence on his ways of handling scale and contouring space. It seems plain that the flow of influence has reversed course since the construction of Gehry's masterpiece, the Bilbao Guggenheim. Among the countless revelations of that incomparable building, for me, was the sight, in its largest room, of a pretty good Serra entitled "Snake," which consists of three elongated-S-shaped steel walls that form two differently shaped corridors. I had been forewarned that the immense gallery made the sculpture appear small. This wasn't so. But the Serra met with an even more surprising fate in that sportively asymmetrical, symphonically articulated hall. The sculpture felt affectionately understood—as disarmed as a pet that rolls over to have its tummy rubbed. With no mediocre regularity of architecture to work against, but only a superior irregularity, "Snake" couldn't bite. It looked nice.

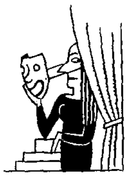
The embracing spirit of the Bilbao Guggenheim, which is ratified by "Switch," promises us some fantastic public places soon, if people who control the requisite wealth and power will only get with it. Sullen forces of inertia—not to speak of manic neo-Victorianism like Tom Wolfe's—must be overcome, but hope seems warranted. We have within reach a creative détente in the hundred-and-some-year war between the avant-gardists and the populists. Making the best of a moment when the past is inert and the future opaque, new art and architecture will devote themselves to all-out intensification of the present. Pleasure, of which the monarch is beauty, will decide the close calls. "Pleasure is by no means an infallible critical guide," W. H. Auden wrote, "but it is the least fallible." That guide assures me that Serra's recent work has the new right stuff. ♦

THE THEATRE

QUIPS AND HIPS

A playwright's struggle with success, and the sassy solace of Mae West.

BY JOHN LAHR



"HALF-IDEALISM is the peritonitis of the soul," Clifford Odets once said. This spiritual malaise—which almost inevitably accompanies sudden acclaim among a certain breed of ambitious *Homo sapiens* living in the vicinity of Broadway or Hollywood—seems to have afflicted the promising playwright David Hirson. In his vivacious second play, "Wrong Mountain" (at the Eugene O'Neill, through February 5th), Hirson raises the curtain on his alter ego, a poet named Henry Dennett (the hilariously sour Ron Rifkin), who writhes in agony from a rare disease that his doctor dubs "contemptiosuarumcupiditatumfilaria"—or "contempt for one's own desires." Dennett is a high-culture vulture brought low by what the same doctor calls "a highly evolved monster"—a tapeworm that is eating at him. As a poet, he has gone from inspiration to publication without circulation; the worm is, natch, the embodiment of his envy of popular success.

Dennett is academic hell on a short fuse; in his bombast Hirson finds a relentless, sometimes exhilarating metaphor for his own internal battle with integrity. Hirson, who studied English literature at Yale and Oxford, was thirty-two when he hit with "La Bête" (1991), an improbable tour de force, written in heroic couplets, that was directed on Broadway by the excellent Richard Jones, who also directs "Wrong Mountain." Although "La Bête" closed with controversial alacrity, Hirson took home a mantelful of prizes, including England's Laurence Olivier Award for best comedy. Now, nearly a decade later, he has tried to address satirically the catastrophe of his success.

In Act I, Dennett is presented as a kind of contemporary Alceste—a whirlwind of idealistic fury who has nothing but sulfurous contempt for popular culture. ("I chose not to demean my talent because something higher chose me!" he says.) You can't take Dennett anywhere; he bullies the world with his highfalutin vitriol, and his tyrannical voice imposes on others the emptiness he feels in himself. Theatre, he hectors, quoting Strindberg, "is a Biblia pauperum . . . a Bible in pictures for the benefit of the illiterate." The new generation of theatregoers are "suburban know-nothings dumbed down to the point of expecting art to be some kind of . . . inclusive, fraudulently life-affirming group-grope, instead of what it is: arrogant, autocratic, and potentially monstrous!"

Dennett can't contain his insolence; and neither, really, can the play. But, in the first act, at least, as we watch Dennett carom from one disaster to another, the play has a linguistic vigor and thrill reminiscent of the reckless bitterness of John Osborne's "Inadmissible Evidence." At a Christmas dinner with his fatuous, politically correct family and his ex-wife's pompous fiancé, a successful Broadway playwright called Guy Halperin (Michael Winters), Dennett crashes and burns. Goaded by Halperin's smugness, Dennett brays, about Halperin's work, "I could toss off a piece of pornography like that before I finished my first wank in the morning." When Dennett suggests that Halperin may have spent his "entire life climbing the wrong mountain," Halperin throws the accusation right back at him. Dennett leaps across the dinner table to choke him, only to find himself choking on his own bile. As the curtain falls, the worm—as big as a cobra—is seen emerging from Dennett's bawling mouth.

In the second act, however, "Wrong Mountain" quickly loses its heady intellectual altitude. On a hundred-thousand-dollar bet with Halperin, Dennett writes a play, which gets him invited to a festival-theatre playwriting competition, and which is subsequently optioned for Broadway. We never see the play. We never see Dennett working on it. Dennett undergoes an internal volte-face, but Hirson can't construct events that effectively

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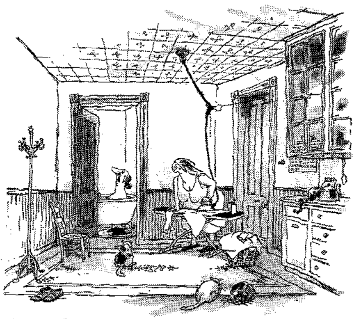

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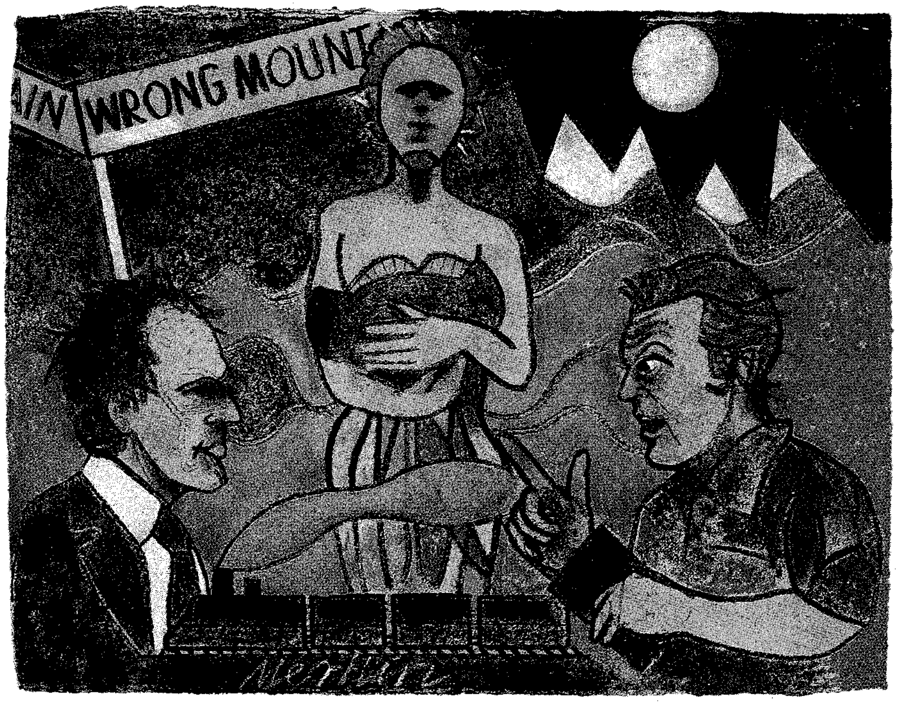
dramatize the substitution, in Dennett's imagination, of the illusion of popularity for the illusion of artistic purity. Instead, in an effort to make up for the play's lack of momentum, Hirson falls back on crowd-pleasing hokum about theatricals and their pretentious thespian ways, the very "toxic kitsch" that Dennett so scathingly deplores in Act I.

"Here's to *me!*" Dennett says, after winning the competition. "Here's to the end of howling in the dark to a world that's not listening! Here's to the end of the snubs and the slights and of no one ever getting your name right! Here's to respect!" Success cures his rage. The worm inside him vanishes, only to be replaced by a "biblically severe" mutation of the disease: Dennett may literally lose his face and become "a sort of featureless moonscape." "What if a man achieved the greatest triumph of his life for something that he viewed with absolute contempt?" he asks his doctor. "He was a poet, but he became a pornographer. He became . . . nobody. He became who he truly was."

The play doesn't resolve the vexing question of intellectual shame; nonetheless, Hirson can't resist ending it pedantically, with a poem, first spoken, then spelled out on the scrim as the lights fade. Words are no problem for Hirson; construction is. "Wrong Mountain" inevitably wheezes to its conclusion like a deflating tire.



Ron Rifkin as the high-culture vulture Henry Dennett, left, celebrates his theatrical début with the director who discovered him, played by Daniel Davis.

RICHARD MERKIN

MAE WEST had no problem with success or with words. "I speak two languages," she said. "English and Body." And she never doubted her stardom, though it took her thirty years to make the world agree. Her flirty and dirty persona—what she called "a deep-dyed hussy without a moral in the world"—is the subject of a cunningly written, raffish evening entitled "Dirty Blonde" (at the New York Theatre Workshop), conceived by the writer-actress Claudia Shear and the director James Lapine. On a stage that is a bare Shocking-pink box with West's bedroom eyes blown up in black-and-white on the back wall, Mae's story is recounted with brio by two fans—Jo (Claudia Shear, who doubles winningly as Mae) and Charlie (the superb Kevin Chamberlin). In their transparent loneliness, both narrators, in their own vulnerable ways, take heart from West's swaggering pursuit of pleasure. The point is made in the play's first beats, where the hidebound characters, even before they've met, praise West in speeches that echo each other. "A tough girl, more than anything else, is a girl who doesn't care if you're shocked," Jo says. "A tough girl doesn't sit like a lady or laugh like a little girl," Charlie says. "She goes where she shouldn't, and when she gets there she does exactly what she wants . . . *and she likes it.*" The success of the play rests not on the louche facts of West's life, which seem almost incidental to the play's drama, but on the intersection of her story with the sweetness of the evolving relationship between the two lost souls who narrate it. In the delicate cross-hatching of the public and the private realms, brilliantly engineered by Lapine, "Dirty Blonde" dramatizes a process that is more astonishing than its well-made parts: how a public persona is both constructed and then internalized by the audience it was meant for.

West's spectacular impudence broadcasts her pedigree as an outsider. Her father had been a bare-knuckle boxer, and in her own life she chose the company of boxers, blacks, racketeers, and drag queens. Her sexual and verbal swagger were imports from the subterranean realms she inhabited. Her education in vamping and camping—what she called "bein' funny and dishy and outrageous and sayin' clever things"—is delightfully staged in "Dirty Blonde." In a period song, two queens (one played by Chamberlin and the other by the resourceful Bob Stillman) instruct Mae in the fine art of exaggeration: "Oh gaily we move at a fair or ball; / such delicious music for one and all! / Our moments of leisure we while away; / Oh my! / Oh dear! / How we pose!"

West's one-liners were a late motion-picture addition to her mischievous arsenal, but she had a genius for them. They presented her as she always wanted to be seen: a woman never at a loss. "Dirty Blonde" demonstrates this cleverly: toward the end of the short evening, Jo discovers that Charlie enjoys dressing up as Mae. They struggle with the revelation but remain friends—a friendship that is almost botched when, after a party, Charlie makes a drunken pass at Jo, who doesn't understand that he's straight and rebuffs him. Back home, Charlie talks to himself as Mae: "Wouldn't know a good thing if it walked up and rang her bell," he drawls. " 'Cause you know what's wrong with you, Charlie? *Nothing.*" West's persona was a confidence trick; and "Dirty Blonde" shows that persona giving confidence. In its finale, this elegantly devised play somehow contrives to have Jo and Charlie, both in Mae's drag, walk hand in hand into the sunset. The piquant image is staged with just the right Westian restraint. "I like restraint," she once said, "if it doesn't go too far." ♦

MUSICAL EVENTS

THE POWER OF ONE

Anne-Sophie Mutter storms New York.

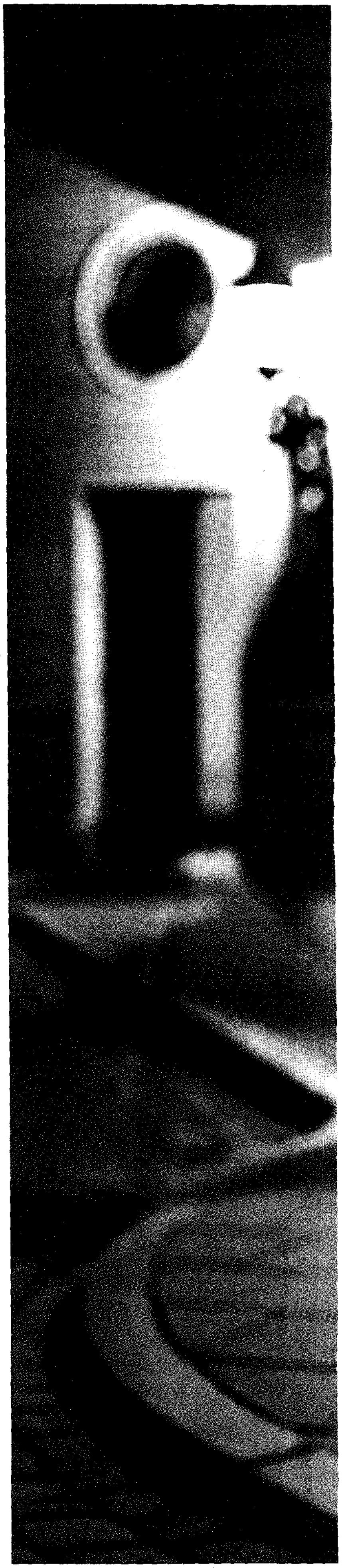
BY ALEX ROSS

MUSIC offers, among other things, the experience of power. Several recent concerts at Carnegie Hall have supplied, almost to excess, the thrill of a mighty sound. One night, Benjamin Zander led the Boston Philharmonic and various New England choruses in a raucous performance of Mahler's Eighth Symphony. The following week, Simon Rattle, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and several busloads of singers went triumphantly overboard in "Gurrelieder," an evening-length, youthful indiscretion by Arnold Schoenberg. When hundreds of musicians make noise together, as they did on both these occasions, they have a seismic impact that no other modern musical spectacle can hope to equal. In the electronic age, the size of a sound usually depends on the technology that produces it: when rock guitarists bang out chords onstage, they may be sweating profusely in the service of their art, but it's the amplification that does the work of destroying everyone's hearing. The monster creations of Mahler and Schoenberg, by contrast, are natural acoustical phenomena carried to a logistical extreme. Their superhuman vastness is nothing more than the sum of an enormous amount of purely human work being done, onstage, with instruments and voices.

Musical power is not simply a matter of decibels. If it were, then the most impressive concert experience would have to be the mass sing-along of "Jerusalem" which takes place every summer at the closing of the BBC Proms, in Royal Albert Hall. One man at the piano, or one woman with a violin, can create the illusion of multitudes. At Carnegie, several weeks ago, Anne-Sophie Mutter opened a program with "Fratres II," by Arvo Pärt. The piece begins with a rapid arpeggiated figure that whispers at first and then grows steadily in volume. In Mutter's hands, the crescendo reached unreal proportions, as if an invisible violin section were joining her. Her bowing arm is a wonder: it is incredibly strong, and yet it never seems to strain. The sound is never strident or tense. Instead, it broadens, deepens, and blooms. To watch Mutter play is to learn lessons in the physics of sound. Force is applied to an object; work is accomplished; power builds, over time.

And that is just the beginning. Mutter is not merely a powerful player; she is also an intellectually formidable one. She dominated the New York musical scene this past month, making three appearances with the New York Philharmonic and giving two recitals at Carnegie, with the pianist Lambert Orkis. She played works by Webern, Respighi, Crumb, Bartók, Ravel, Lutoslawski, Bernstein, Berg, Sibelius, Rihm, Penderecki, Pärt, Shostakovich, Stravinsky, and Prokofiev—all twentieth-century composers, and not always easy ones. If you also consider her physical beauty—her most recent CD-liner photos would do fine on the cover of *Vogue* or *Bazaar*—you might complain, as some of her colleagues do, that it's all a bit much. But Mutter lacks the smug brilliance that one finds in many younger virtuosos of the Juilliard type. Her playing has a wandering, sometimes wild character, as if she had yet to find what she is looking for. May she never find it.

MUTTER came on the scene in 1977, as a protégé of Herbert von Karajan. She was only thirteen years old. The musical world is littered with the husks of Karajan favorites,



The violinist in 1990: The glamorous prodigy has grown into an intellectually formidable artist. Photograph by Helmut Newton.

who tended to be technically perfect and emotionally cold. Mutter began recording for Deutsche Grammophon, and her first efforts, for all their tonal beauty, matched the Karajan stereotype. In the eighties, at a time when she might have been expected to burn out, her artistic profile unexpectedly changed. She heeded the advice of the great violin pedagogue Carl Flesch, who taught Mutter's own teachers. Flesch wrote that prodigies, with their uncanny knack for mimicry, must work exceptionally hard at building an adult creative self. Mutter found her path when she encountered the music of Witold Lutoslawski, the late Polish master, who wrote in a vibrant, lyrical avant-garde style. She became an advocate of contemporary music, and, at the same time, her interpretations of mainstream repertory deepened. A case in point was her 1993 collection of virtuoso showpieces, "Carmen-Fantasie." The disk led off with Sarasate's "Zigeunerweisen," a wonderful mishmash of Gypsy airs, and she played the opening phrase with such thunderous flair that she seemed to be delivering a manifesto: she now had the power to transform anything she touched.

Like all great virtuosos, Mutter is a willful player who often twists the music to suit her personality. That personality, however, is so rich and varied that the music is seldom limited by her sometimes heavy-handed treatment of it. Because she has one foot in the romantic world and one foot in the modern one, the modern often comes out sounding romantic and the romantic modern. This effect of musical chiasmus was most evident in the Philharmonic program that paired the Berg and Sibelius concertos. The Berg, soaked in warm, sweet tone, had never seemed so Mahlerian. The Sibelius came off as dark, jagged, strange. One tended to forget that it was the Berg that was written according to the twelve-tone system, and that it was the Sibelius that was written under the influence of Tchaikovsky. In fact, Mutter played both concertos in much the same style. She made no concession either to Berg's reputation for complexity or to Sibelius's alleged propensity for kitsch.

The "Mutter effect" has much to do, I think, with her creative approach to pitch and rhythm. She can deliver stratospheric notes on the E string with fearsome accuracy, and yet she can also treat pitch with daring freedom. That burnished tone seems to surround the printed note rather than hit it head on. Even as passages in the finale of the Sibelius concerto threatened to veer out of control, the hint of chaos was in keeping with the earthy dance character of the music. A run of thirds came off as an atonal shriek, but the low notes that finished the phrase were intoned with such booming clarity that the performer seemed to have made precisely the noise that she intended. A series of upward-running figures in the Adagio became a sequence of inward-turned meditations, with the durations of the notes varied in an improvisatory, almost aleatory, style. Mutter's drastic revision of the piece was supported at every turn by Kurt Masur and the New York Philharmonic, who, mindful perhaps of the public-television audience that had tuned in for the occasion, were in excellent form. (Two days later, they devolved, turning in a repulsively mechanical performance of "La Valse.")

In classical repertory, Mutter is not quite so convincing. In her recorded survey of the Beethoven violin sonatas, she does not always let the argument speak for itself. In the first movement of the "Kreutzer" Sonata, she underlines what Beethoven has already written in heavy ink. Her accompanist, Lambert Orkis, who is an endlessly resourceful companion in twentieth-century repertory, sounds a little underpowered in Beethoven's piano parts. Mutter's taste in contemporary music, too, is variable: her advocacy of Penderecki's Second Violin Concerto betrays a weakness for music that is perfectly tailored to her talents but is otherwise meaningless. There's not much point, however, in looking around for quibbles. What to say about an artist who is exactly as good as her publicists say she is? I only hope that one day they come up with something more poetic than "the world's most exciting violinist." ♦

DANCING

BEETHOVEN BELLY-UP

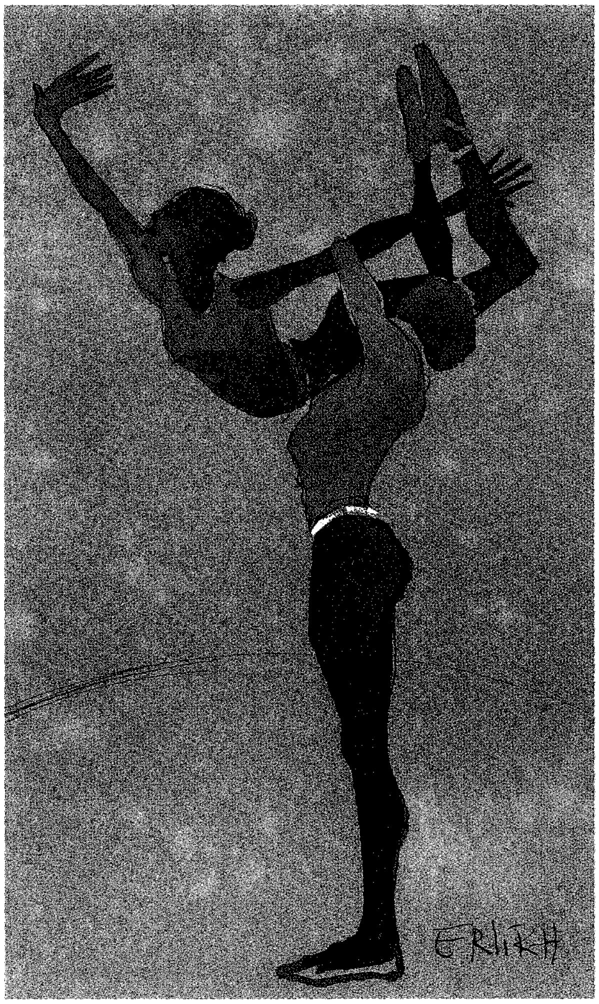
Twyla Tharp tackles the Seventh Symphony at New York City Ballet.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

MOST good artists (I'm not talking about Stravinsky or Picasso) have one basic idea—one story, even one image, that haunts them—and that is why most good artists have about ten to fifteen really good years. They get to the end of their ways of embodying the idea. Twyla Tharp's idea is freedom versus order. This may not sound like an original notion, but neither do most artists' ideas when reduced to three words, and how many stories are there about human life anyway? The execution is the thing. Furthermore, Tharp's freedom versus order has many subdivisions: jazz versus classical, modern dance versus ballet, America versus Europe, instinct versus wisdom. Her fertility is such that she has been able to work on this idea for about thirty years. And though many people would say that she did her best work in the seventies, the years of "Baker's Dozen" and "Push Comes to Shove," she is still, intermittently, producing lovely dances. So it's sad that her most recent piece—"The Beethoven Seventh," which had its première in late January, at New York City Ballet—is such a trivial thing.

It looks all the more minor since its music is so major. Tharp is not the first choreographer to tackle Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. Isadora Duncan used it; so did Léonide Massine, and it's quite *dansable*. (Wagner called it the "apotheosis of the dance.") But it's also pretty dense, in the way that Beethoven can be. Massine did not treat it lightly. His "Seventh Symphony" had a Creation of the World and a Destruction of the World, with a Descent from the Cross in between.

Tharp has no truck with such portentousness. Her piece is about freedom and order. What that means is that here, as in most of her pieces for ballet companies, she very knowingly mixes the rule-driven *danse d’école* with a lot of unruly stuff: jazz, boogie, and ordinary movement, too. (One dancer, whose partner is busy doing a solo, stands there with her hands on her hips—“When’s he coming back?”—until he finishes.) The ballet has no story, just three different couples, plus ensemble, in three different moods. The opening section is a winsome announcement of the piece’s eclecticism: Peter Boal, a very pure classicist, trying to do what looks like a combination of disco and Irish step dancing—some ballet, too—with Jenifer Ringer. The second movement is a walking duet for Wendy Whelan and Nikolaj Hübbe. In the third movement, Damian Woetzel and Miranda Weese tear around and have fun. All three couples, and the corps, make common cause in the final movement, so freedom becomes order once again. What in Massine was a proclamation about human fate is, in Tharp, something more agnostic: a story about individuals but with a sort of faith in underlying concord.



Wendy Whelan and Nikolaj Hübbe: Whelan has become human and serious, and, in this performance, sexy.

EDUARD ERLIKH

Which would be fine if it were interesting. One person, Whelan, does make something out of it, but then Whelan makes something out of everything these days. Who knew, when this skinny girl started dancing with New York City Ballet in 1984, that she would eventually be a star of the company? No one, and no one could have imagined it, for, at that time, N.Y.C.B. was still consecrated to the effulgent female image—part angel, part movie queen—that Balanchine placed at the center of his work. Such an ideal was the farthest thing from the clipped competence that Whelan showed as a young dancer. But in the decade that followed Balanchine’s death, in 1983, that female image, with no one looking for it, no one fostering it, began to shrink. And suddenly, about five years ago, Whelan began to grow. I don’t know how; these things are personal. (She got a new boyfriend? She read Dostoyevsky?) Whatever—she transformed herself, became human and serious. And in the intimate, we’ve-been-together-for-a-long-time pas de deux that Tharp, iconoclastically, set to the second movement (that’s the part where Massine had the Descent from the Cross), Whelan was not just human and serious but also sexy. Strands of her hair came loose. Her moves unwound like thoughts. There were catches in her breathing. Looking at her, we saw our other life, our buried life, the life we live in the theatre.

Who did this, Whelan or Tharp? Both, obviously. But nothing else in “The Beethoven Seventh” came within miles of it. Boal and Ringer mainly struggled with the partnering. Damian Woetzel got to do the sort of butch acrobatics he is so good at. (This time, he spun on his stomach.) Yet only Whelan’s performance had any progression, any build. Tharp didn’t seem to *try*. Did New York City Ballet, home of the great Balanchine, give her the jitters? (She always makes American Ballet Theatre, home of lesser choreographers, look at least glamorous. But then she has worked with N.Y.C.B. only once before, whereas she’s made thirteen ballets for A.B.T.) Isaac Mizrahi, usually a superb ballet costumer, supplied the bizarre outfits, layered things of bras and tights and tarlatans and God knows what. The musicians played the Beethoven well, which almost made up for what they did to Tchaikovsky and Brahms earlier in the week.

As for the company, it is still the strange thing that it has been for the last four or five years—that is, better than what it was in the decade before but nevertheless in big trouble. There are whole ballets, great ballets (“Episodes,” “Stravinsky Violin Concerto”), that you’re scared to go see, they’ve been done so badly for so long now. In others, there are parts where you reflexively tense up—wince, grab the armrest—knowing that a step is coming up that they can’t do anymore. And up it comes, and again they can’t do it. Beyond technical weakness, there is the general problem, season after season, of lowered sights: no vividness, no depth, no *thought* of depth. With the exception of Whelan, Peter Martins’ first generation of leading dancers—Margaret and Kathleen Tracey, Nilas Martins, Jock Soto, Yvonne Borree—are a tired bunch. (Other, better dancers—Hübbe, Darci Kistler—have been drastically reduced by injuries.) We see these people week after week.

And then there are the youngsters, the ones who began brightening the scene a few years ago. Maria Kowroski gets better and better. Her natural daintiness is still there, but joined to a new daring. Her scissor kicks in “Mozartiana” could kill anybody who got in the way. Together with Kowroski we now have Jennie Somogyi, all detail, all fullness. And what confidence! She just tucks us under her arm and takes off. She’s twenty-two. There are others: Rachel Rutherford, Benjamin Millepied, Jared Angle, Janie Taylor. (Why does Taylor look so frightened, though?) These are the lights in the darkness. We watch them joyfully, nervously. ◆

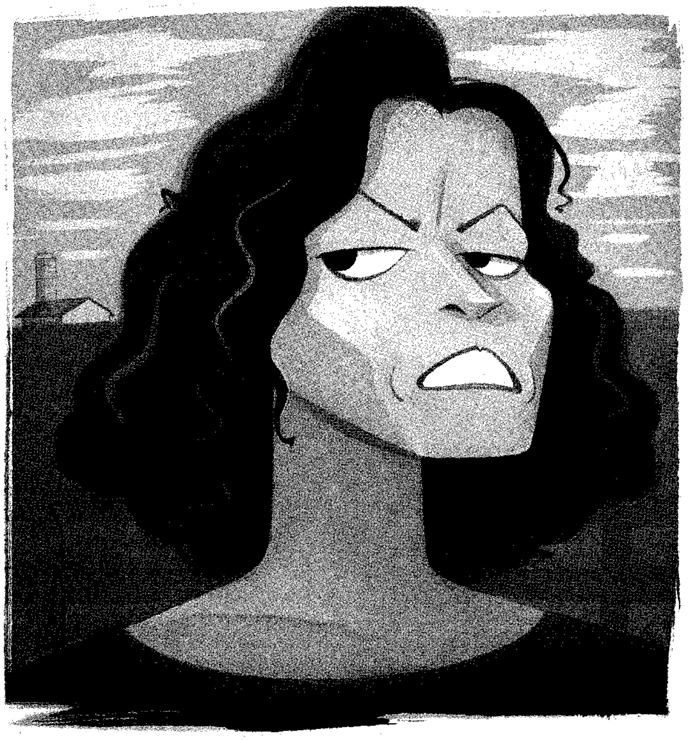
THE CURRENT CINEMA

SCARY WOMEN

The farmer's wife and Jacqueline Susann.

BY DAVID DENBY

SIGOURNEY WEAVER, of the high-altitude clavicle and the formidable brow, has never taken the easy way out. Tall and aristocratic-looking, she is built for heroic roles, and from 1979's "Alien" to the present her form of heroism has been to play pained, angry, will-driven women. On the stage, Weaver has had relaxed, funny moments, but in movies she is a mask of fury. In "Gorillas in the Mist" and "Death and the Maiden," for example, her anger seemed almost an end in itself—the meaning of her performances (for her, at least), apart from anything her characters needed to express. Weaver is an extraordinary actress but she can turn performing into an arena of struggle in which it is death to let down one's guard. Her work has its punitive side, and sometimes a self-punishing side, too. Do we all need to be taught a lesson? Perhaps not always.



Sigourney Weaver in "A Map of the World": a performance of many surprises in a movie about things going really badly.

ERIC PALMA

What's pleasing about Weaver's performance as Alice, the intellectual farmwife in "A Map of the World," is its range, its many surprises. There's anger here, but also a new, tentative, exploratory spirit. Alice is another tough cookie, yet she can be funny, in a harsh sort of way, and she has shades of irony and perversity in her temperament which are hard to account for. The screenwriters, Peter Hedges and Polly Platt, and the director, Scott Elliott, who adapted their story from Jane Hamilton's earnest, accomplished 1994 novel, don't want us to like their heroine too easily. When we first see her, she's furious at her tantrummy little daughter (she has a placid daughter, too). Later, she reaches for her cat and squeezes it so as not to wring the child's neck.

Weaver, with her aura of specialness, doesn't seem much like a farmer's wife, but we quickly understand that Alice and her husband (David Strathairn) are urban types having a go at raising cows. The catastrophe that engulfs them isn't their fault, but their lack of rapport with the country folk of Wisconsin doesn't help. When Alice is inattentive for a moment, a little girl, the daughter of a neighbor (Julianne Moore), drowns in her pond. Suddenly, Alice is the enemy of the people. At the school where she works as a nurse, one of the kids, egged on by his vindictive mother, claims that she sexually abused him. The community closes its heart, and Alice, seriously in trouble, makes haughty and easily misinterpreted remarks that get her into much deeper trouble. She lands in jail, and doesn't seem very interested in getting out. Disgusted and bored, she wants a break from her life. Her fall from grace leaves her bemused—rebellious in spirit but passive in action.

This is a movie about things going really badly. Apart from the drowning of the little girl, there are misunderstandings, missed telephone calls, rumors that become accusations. Not even Thomas Hardy could have constructed a tale in which so many unfortunate circumstances collude against a proud and intelligent person. Normally, I would say that when accidents play so large a role in a story the results are not only enraging but contrary to the best dramatic practice. But "A Map of the World" is, finally, not enraging; it reminds us, with great success, that life can be tough.

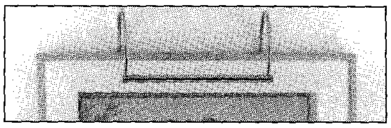
Scott Elliott, a young director with wide experience in the theatre, makes his movie début here and he works with amazing confidence and calm. Elliott stages the family scenes very simply, very directly, holding the tensions in place with minimal dialogue and no obvious emphasis. He creates the silence in which complex things can happen; he establishes an extraordinary sexual candor between Weaver and Strathairn, and attends to such things as the way people talk to their friends' children. After a while, we realize that nothing in the movie is arbitrary, that the shape of the story is created by accident and character joined together. Alice is unlucky, but, like other bright people trying to live in a conformist society, she willfully brings trouble on herself. She's demanding and sarcastic, a little vain, and, perhaps, frightening, but she is also, at times, guilt-ridden and remorseful. Elliott seems to have encouraged Weaver to loosen up, to discover the complexities of the character as she goes along. That facial mask, so rigid in some of her earlier movies, alters into blank wonder and giddy disbelief. When she says such things as "I am trying to have a complete nervous breakdown, and no one will let me do it in peace," and then laughs uncontrollably, she might be expressing her desire for liberation as an actress. She withholds anger when we most expect her to express it. She's reaching for something else—for the humor that makes life bearable. Sigourney Weaver has always been a fearless actress, and she may now, at last, be turning into a lyrical one.

"ISN'T SHE GREAT," the story of the resistible rise of the author Jacqueline Susann, appears to have been made for a gay men's retirement community in Omaha. As far as I know, no such place exists—which should give you some idea of the difficulties the movie may face in finding an audience. As the writer, Paul Rudnick, and the director, Andrew Bergman, tell it, the pre-"Valley of the Dolls" Jackie Susann (Bette Midler) was a shrill nobody, a pathetic, noisy, and inept woman who screwed up everything she touched and may well have been too dumb to shop. At the beginning of the movie, Jackie, a show-biz hanger-on, is reduced to jumping into the pond in Central Park. She is rescued from its turbid depths by one Irving Mansfield (Nathan Lane), a press agent who has no evident business and who is utterly, and quite mysteriously, devoted to Jackie's ambitions. Together they stand in the Park and take turns demanding success from God, who resides, apparently, in a tree. It's a little hard to know how to react to these spiritual monologues (there are quite a few of them), or to anything else in the picture, since virtually every scene is flat, or crude, or just plain stupid—a cross between burlesque and camp, and mortifyingly unfunny either way.

As Jackie ascends, the movie might be a gay cabaret version of her life. Vignettes of success and heartbreak follow one another breathlessly under the spotlight. There is plenty of misery—Jackie and Irving have an autistic child—but in the end Jackie writes her three best-sellers and gets to storm around town wearing leopard-skin suits and awful, expensive Pucci outfits. This, apparently, is heaven: making an entrance on a talk show while throwing one's arms up like Rosalind Russell in "Auntie Mame." In the past, the hip-swinging Midler offered complicity with the audience—she knew that we enjoyed the flashes of put-on cheapness, the strutting and vamping that became a form of knowing parody. But, after years of playing smart, Bette Midler has disastrously metamorphosed into the ultra-square vulgarian that she has always satirized. This ham-handed performance is offered without irony, and the movie compounds the problem by suggesting that Jackie's kind of noisy success is the only kind worth having. "Isn't She Great" celebrates tastelessness, and the movie itself lacks sensibility in every way. Bergman stages the scenes with the autistic child so badly that one almost suspects him of making a sick joke. No one without a genuine talent for camp should ever try for it.

The picture is based on "Wasn't She Great?," Michael Korda's portrait of Susann, which was published in this magazine in 1995. Korda wrote about a recognizably shrewd and relentless person who always got what she wanted, a gorgon who was also, for him, a kind of heroine—Jackie Susann the media revolutionary, whose aggressive showmanship sold millions of books. But Rudnick and Bergman drop so much of the shrewdness that Jackie seems almost a freak. Looking at the ignorant woman in the movie, we can't imagine how she could have written such proficient, highly readable potboilers—how she could have created her vibrant trash about cold-hearted studs and pill-popping, suffering women.

Korda, who worked as Susann's editor at Simon & Schuster on the 1969 novel "The Love Machine," knows what Susann was capable of. He wrote a genuine appreciation of her, though his appreciation also left some of us feeling uneasy. Yes, it's funny that Jackie Susann smashed up the stuffy traditions of book publishing. But how great a feat was that? Do Jackie Susann's methods work with anything but Jackie Susann-type books? Most of the writers I know would say that publishers still aren't very good at selling. Korda's piece, I thought, was much too gleeful; he seemed propelled by the exhilaration of carrying a society into junk. Roll over, Maxwell Perkins! "Isn't She Great" is nothing more than a lame, tawdry movie, but it's a depressing experience nonetheless—a prime example of the flotsam-and-jetsam culture in which some of the best, as well as many of the worst, haplessly float. ♦



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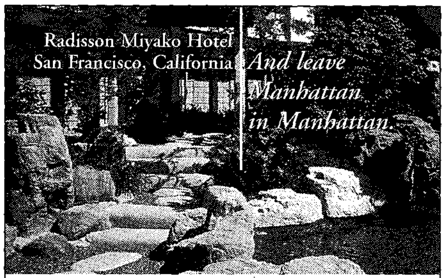

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THE BACK PAGE

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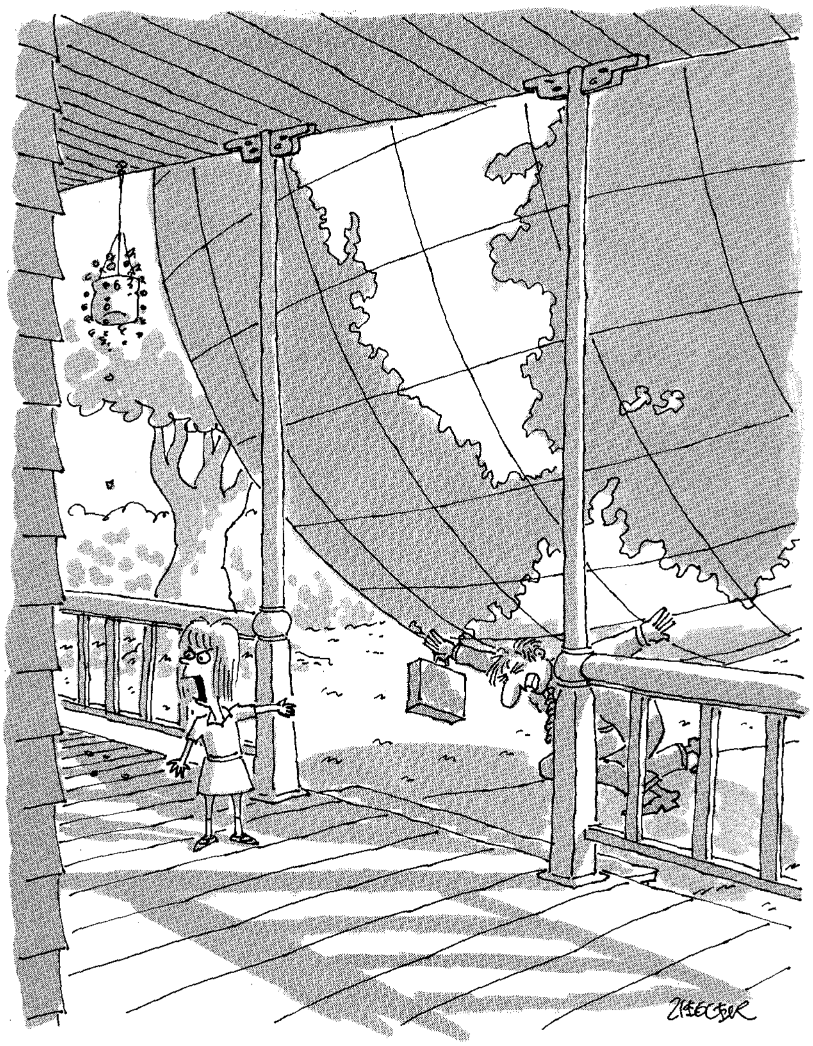


"Mom, Dad's been on eBay again!"

The response to the caption contest we announced last November, in our annual Cartoon Issue, was impressive. By E-mail and by snail mail, by fax and by courier, more than five thousand captions flowed into Contest Headquarters high above midtown Manhattan, where a trained task force fed data into banks of humming computers and crack humor specialists classified, evaluated, cross-referenced, and ranked the entries.

The drawing to which readers were asked to provide a caption is full of specific detail—the huge globe, the rural (or suburban) porch, the apparently angry little girl yelling something to someone in the house—and most, if not necessarily all, of this detail had to be taken into account. This made the task extremely hard—harder than if the drawing had been something more generic and open-ended, such as two guys in a bar or a dog on a desert island. So why did we go with this particular drawing? Because we (a) liked it and (b) wanted to put it in the magazine and (c) couldn't think of a really good caption for it ourselves. So we figured, Why not let everybody else try?

The "winner"—in distancing quotes because winning is such a vulgar concept when it comes to art, don't you think?—is Vince Banes, of Silver Spring, Maryland, whose caption is under the drawing. (You didn't have to be a rocket scientist to win, but it just so happens that Mr. Banes is one.) He was the first of some six dozen readers who came up with this very same idea, or a nearly identical variation of it, also playing on the eBay joke. So what Mr. Banes actually won was more like a race. Still: good for him.

This caption was not necessarily cleverer, more ingenious, or more imaginative than every single one of the others, but in some hard-to-define way it hit closest to the bull's-eye. It was topical, depending for its punch on the currency of an Internet fad whose power to get laughs has already begun to fade. But it was generally thought to be quite funny, and it was the one we could most easily see being picked for the magazine in the course of one of our regular Wednesday art meetings. One task-force member—and only one—pointed out that, technically, the guy under the globe should be a U.P.S. delivery man. To this we can only reply, "Yeah, but maybe the dad had it delivered to his office."

We also liked "Atlas Schlepped"—Palma Swirsky's suggestion—but that would have had to run as a title, not a caption. Here are a few more honorable mentions, arranged by category:

ALCOHOL: *"Mom, better make it a double."* (Barbara Evangeline Litke)

ANTI-TRUST: *"Delivery for Mr. Gates!"* (Madhuri Nicola)

BOOKS: *"Mom, looks like Susan Faludi was right."* (Louis Plauché)

DOMESTIC LIFE: *"Heads up, Mom, Dad's adding props to the melodrama."* (Jean Sorensen)

ENVIRONMENTALISM: *"Mom, that Greenpeace man is here again!"* (Richard Viglione)

LANGUAGE: *"Mom! Dad's being literal."* (Pam Inglesby)

LOCAL ALL-NEWS RADIO: *"Mom, do you have twenty-two minutes?"* (Liz Starin)

MALTHUSIANISM: *"Mom, better set six billion more places."* (Julia Sonney)

MEDICATION: *"He's off the Prozac again!"* (Carol Robbins)

MYTHOLOGY-BASED HOMONYMS: *"Yes, he is hatless, but that's not what I said."* (Diane Van Wyck)

OBJECTIVISM: *"Auntie Ayn, your date is here."* (Declan Burke, M.D.)

PSYCHIATRY: *"Mom, Dad's gone bipolar again."* (Maryl Schapiro)

SARCASM: *"Mr. Let's Live in Connecticut and Escape the Stress is home."* (Marvin Ginsburg)

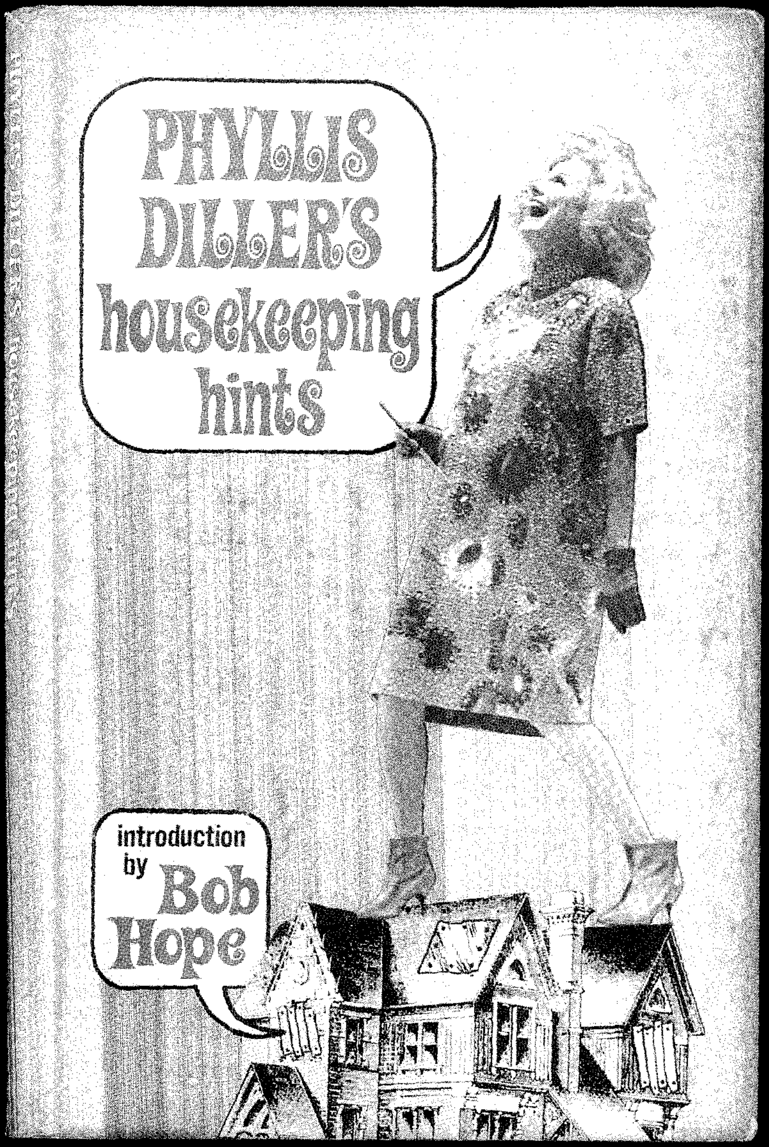
SEX: *"Mom, Dad wants to know if you felt the earth move."* (Mike Gesker)

SHOPPING: *"But I ordered the small stress-relief handball!"* (Michelle Lippman)

SPORTS: *"Hey, Mom, Coach Glick's here to recruit Timmy."* (Paul Snare)

UNDERSTATEMENT: *"Mom, there's some guy here with a briefcase."* (Barbara Schill) ♦

June 8, 1967. You purchase as gag gift for older sister's wedding shower.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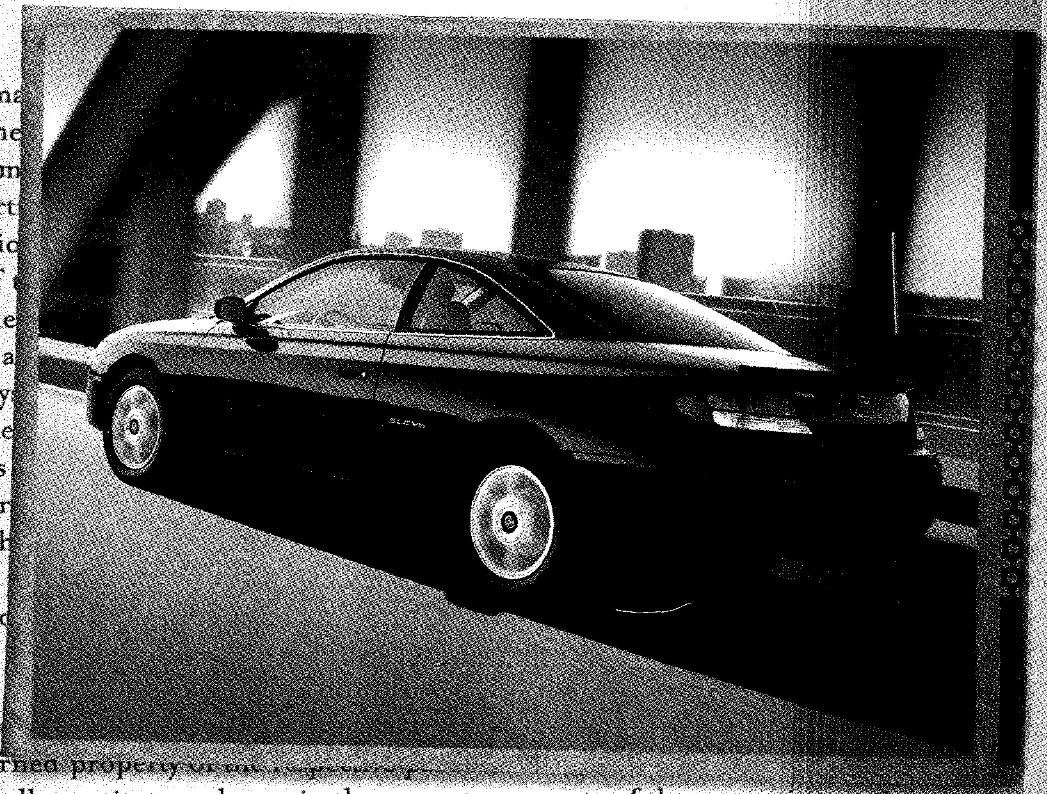

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